THE MOULS HOUSE MYSTERY

CHARLES BARRY

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THE MOULS HOUSE MYSTERY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE DETECTIVE'S HOLIDAY

THE SMALLER PENNY

THE MOULS HOUSE MYSTERY

BY

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A Toothache Cure	1
II.	"Uncommonly Like Murder!"	6
III.	A Family Quarrel	11
IV.	Family History	17
V.	At the Foot of the Cliff	23
VI.	On the Cliff Top	32
VII.	Fur Coat and Card Case	39
VIII.	One of the Big Five	47
IX.	Facts and Fancies	54
X.	Neglect of Duty	63
XI.	Walks and Talks	69
XII.	A Silk Scarf	77
XIII.	More Alarums	84
XIV.	Youth's Way	93
XV.	The Woman in the Case	101
XVI.	A Few Little Jobs	111
XVII.	Guide and Gossip	118
XVIII.	Seaweed in Maida Vale	126
XIX.	The List Getting Smaller	133
XX.	A Message Decoded	140

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXI.	The "Tailing" of Aussie . .	148
XXII.	Inspector Straker Reports .	154
XXIII.	Floating in wi' the Tide . .	162
XXIV.	Question and Answer . .	169
XXV.	The Maid's Story . . .	176
XXVI.	Another Disappearance . .	183
XXVII.	Aylward Makes a Statement .	190
XXVIII.	A Rustic Belle	197
XXIX.	A Plan of Campaign . . .	204
XXX.	By Sea and Land . . .	210
XXXI.	"Mental Processes" . . .	220
XXXII.	What Really Happened . .	228
XXXIII.	A Double Event . . .	239

The characters in this Story are entirely fictitious, and no reference is made or intended to any living person.

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CHAPTER I

A TOOTHACHE CURE

SUPERINTENDENT LIDDELL, of the Cornwall County Police, though new to the district was not particularly interested in the breaking of the waves against the cliffs in this somewhat inaccessible corner of it, and was entirely oblivious of the gradual encroachment of the fast-running tide on the broad expanse of Polreath beach. He cared little just then for the fact that Polreath was proud of its beach and of the cliffs which enclosed it. During the first afternoon of a proposed week-end stay he had paid his meed of tribute to them, by bathing with the enthusiasm of a boy on his holidays from the one and then standing in the pouring rain upon the other, lost in admiration of the beauties of this strip of Cornish coast. The result, as he bitterly told himself, was only what might have been expected at his time of life—a toothache.

This middle-aged police-officer was not a patient sufferer. At first, unable to sleep, he had read the local *Wadebridge and Padstow Guardian*, advertisements and all, by the light of his candle; but now, long after midnight, news and illumination having both given out, he was in pitch darkness, clad only in pyjamas, alternately pacing the confines of his bedroom and staring out into the night. The absence of distraction made the pain seem worse, but there was no remedy. In the " Paying Guest Establishment "—aptly enough

if unoriginally named " Ocean View "—where he had taken up his temporary quarters, even he, the chief police authority of the district, would not have dared to rouse the proprietress from her slumbers for the purpose of asking for another candle. As he stood at the window, the powerful red flash of Trevose lighthouse in the distance seemed in his imagination to set the time for each periodic sharp twinge of pain.

" Ocean View " stood on a cliff at the extreme north end of the horse-shoe shaped bay round which the village of Polreath was rapidly growing, and had it been day, Superintendent Liddell could have had from his window a view of the entire coastline to the south as far as Trevose lighthouse, whose crimson glare swept the sea every few seconds. The cliffs on the opposite side of the bay would, however, have hidden the indentation made by the sand-choked estuary of the River Camel. Now, in the darkness, only a flickering light in the distance showed where the Padstow lifeboat lay, with steam ever raised in anticipation of a call for help. Padstow itself was hidden from view.

The hard, silvery beach, forty feet below the window at which the superintendent stood, spread out to the left like a mighty stadium around which villas and bungalows appeared like grand stands erected for privileged spectators of Nature's pageant. On the opposite end of the horse-shoe, not visible at this late hour, like a pendant to " Ocean View " and just as ugly, stood a big grey house of Georgian heaviness, whose windows on the Polreath side dominated the massive headland of Pentire and the open sea beyond. A sudden light in the direction of this building drew the superintendent's gaze.

" Lucky beggars ! " he reflected ruefully, " They've got electricity ! "

He remembered having heard earlier in the evening the chug-chug of an engine as he passed the house.

" Humph ! " he grunted after a few seconds, as the

light still remained, "I'm not the only sleepless one!"

It was too far to see clearly into the illuminated room—a fact which probably explained the absence of a window blind—for from the beach underneath the jutting cliff hid the interior of the room. It seemed to the police-officer, however, that shadows were passing with a strange and irregular rapidity between the light and himself. Curiosity conquered, and Superintendent Liddell groped on his night table for the field glasses he had left there on coming in that evening. They had not been focused on the lighted window for more than a few seconds before he lowered them again with an exclamation.

"What the——" he began, and raised the glasses again. In a moment he was striking a match, in another he had found his coat. As he drew this on, he ran again to the window and focused the binoculars on the house opposite.

"Hi! There!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Stop that!"

The sound of his own voice brought realisation of the futility of making it carry such a distance, even had it not been smothered by the roar of the incoming tide, and he fumbled on the floor for his boots. A minute later the other occupants of the Paying Guest Establishment were roused from their slumbers by the clatter of unlaced heavy boots descending the stairs at breakneck speed, followed by the thunderous bang of the front door as the superintendent dashed out into the night muttering wildly as he ran. Heedless alike of the commotion he had caused and of the blinding rain which met him, Liddell ran headlong down the slope to the stone stairs leading to the beach. There he uttered a vigorous oath, for the lower steps were covered with water and clouds of spray met him before he had descended half-way. Impossible to cross the beach at that state of the tide! He must go round by the cliff path, which he had seen earlier

in the day but over which he had not had occasion to walk. With a hopeless gesture the superintendent stopped and looked at the silver-topped waves beating against the steps. Then, remembering the binoculars which he still held by the strap, he turned round and peered through them at the lighted window across the bay. As he looked he stamped his feet in futile anger.

"Too late now!" he muttered finally as he lowered his glasses.

Suddenly his rage gave place to a dead calm, and turning abruptly on his heel he walked quickly back to "Ocean View." As he approached the boarding-house he noted that all the rooms were illuminated by the flickering light of candles, and that shadows blocked every window. At the front door a severe, thin-lipped lady in a red dressing-gown stood in his path, holding aloft a smoking paraffin lamp.

"What does this mean, Mr.——" she began, but the police-officer interrupted brusquely.

"Get me a lantern quickly, Miss Tansey," he ordered. "And I want somebody to show me the way to the other side of the beach by the cliff path."

"Here you are!" came a youthful voice from behind the manageress before she could reply. "I've got an electric torch, and I'll show you the way. What's the trouble?"

"Come on, then!" Liddell replied. "Trouble enough! I'll tell you as we go along."

"Right, oh!" the young man agreed. "Wait a tick, though, till I put on a pair of boots and a "mack.'"

"What *is* the meaning of this, Mr. Liddell?" Miss Tansey insisted, feeling that she was being ignored too much in the presence of her "guests," who were now congregated in full force at open windows and on the landings.

"*Superintendent* Liddell," the owner of the name emphasised. "It is police business, which cannot

concern you just now, Miss Tansey. I advise you to go back to bed."

Whatever the indignant lady was about to say was interrupted by the reappearance of the young man who had volunteered to guide the superintendent across the cliffs. Catching the police officer familiarly by the arm he led him off, pressing at the same time the button of a powerful torch.

"My name's Duncan," he said after the first few steps. "James Duncan. I've just heard you mention yours. What's the great idea?"

"The great idea, sonny," Liddell replied grimly, stopping, "is—— But just take a look through these at the big house on the cliff opposite."

He handed the field-glasses to the youth, who halted, mystified, and put them to his eyes.

"But, but——" he said, "I don't understand. I can't see anything. The house is in darkness."

He turned his torch full on the superintendent's face as if to assure himself that he was not mad. Liddell shaded his eyes from the glare and peered through the night.

"You're right!" he said, and moved forward. "They have turned out the light. We can see nothing now. Let's hurry! And—— Good Lord! My toothache's gone!"

CHAPTER II

"UNCOMMONLY LIKE MURDER!"

DUNCAN stopped dead and extinguished his torch.

"Look here, old sport," his voice came through the darkness, "You come back to bed. Jolly sight better for you than traipsing over Cornish cliffs in the small hours."

Liddell was about to retort angrily, before he realised the reason for the young man's new attitude. He laughed instead.

"Switch on that light again, sonny," he said. "I'm not mad. I've had a toothache all evening and I saw something over in that house that drove it away. Come on! Get a move on for Heaven's sake!"

The saneness of the superintendent's tone rather than his words seemed to convince the young man, for he switched on the light and led the way at a sharp pace without a word. They had proceeded a hundred yards before either of them spoke.

"Well, what about it?" Duncan said at last. "What is the 'something' you saw?"

"The something I saw, young fellow," Liddell replied grimly, "looked uncommonly like murder to me."

"Murder!"

"Yes, my boy, murder!"

"Well, I'm—— But what the blazes? Come on! We're crawling! Where was it? Who? In that big house on the cliff?"

The youth had increased his pace while he jerked

out his questions. Liddell, panting a little, imitated him while he replied :

" Yes, in that house ! I saw—phew—phew—I saw a man throttling another."

" Good Lord ! Yes ? Who was it ? "

" Dunno ! Man who was throttled was in pyjamas —old chap, grey moustache, and——"

" That's old Tretheway, sure as death ! " Duncan interrupted. " And who did it ? "

" Fellow with dark, pointed beard ! "

" Never ! "—Duncan halted suddenly and Liddell nearly collided with him.

" What do you mean ? " the police-officer asked as the young man moved forward again, " I saw him— he was fully dressed in a grey tweed suit—with his fingers on the old man's throat."

" Good God ! " Duncan exclaimed, again hastening forward. " Charlie Aylward would never do that ! Never, I tell you, though he doesn't like the old boy."

" You seem to know all about them," said Liddell. " Who is Charlie Aylward ? "

" Mrs. Tretheway's nephew—dead brother's son. Up at Cambridge with me. Good fellow ! Wouldn't hurt a fly ! Come on, for the Lord's sake ! Hurry ! "

They were almost running by now, risking a nasty fall with every step on the slippery and uneven path. At last, fully ten minutes after their departure from " Ocean View," they reached the gates of the big house on the cliff. These were wide open and the two men hurried up the gravel path to the front door. This the superintendent pushed tentatively, and was not greatly astonished to find that it yielded to his touch.

" Phew ! " he whistled, nevertheless. " Open ! "

" So much the better," Duncan whispered. " Let's take off our boots and go upstairs. I know where Charlie's room is."

Liddell hesitated a moment.

"I don't think we can very well do that," he objected. "Besides, I want to see the old man's room—not Aylward's."

"They're in the same corridor," the younger man replied. "Almost opposite each other. Come on."

Liddell muttered something about "the legality of the thing," but imitated his young companion, who was already pulling off his sodden boots. They presented a curious sight as they stood in the light of Duncan's torch, which he had laid on a hatstand—the younger man in his dripping mackintosh and bare feet, and the police-officer with scanty hair wet and in disorder, in soaked sports jacket and clammy mud-bespattered pyjama trousers—a disreputable pair!

"Come on!" Duncan whispered, and led the way, directing the torch towards a broad staircase. Reaching the first landing, they turned down a corridor to the left. At a door on the right hand side of this, the young man stopped and knocked gently. There was no reply and he tried the door-handle. It turned at his touch and he entered the room, flashing his torch around. Liddell followed on his heels and touched a switch on the wall. In the sudden glare the two men stared at each other. The room was empty. It showed, furthermore, obvious signs of a hasty evacuation. The bed had been occupied. Liddell bent down and slipped his hand under the blankets. With a grunt he turned towards a chest of drawers near the window. The drawers were pulled out and articles of underclothing lay on the floor. There were no toilet accessories on the dressing-table.

"Charlie's gone!" Duncan whispered.

"Obviously!" was Liddell's dry confirmation. "And in a hurry!"

"He was here this evening," the young man continued as if bewildered. "I was talking to him."

The superintendent walked over to the window. Only the red flash of the distant lighthouse pierced the darkness. The waves beat against the cliff below with a roar like that of a passing train.

" This won't do ! " he exclaimed impatiently to his companion. " We are wasting time. Where is the old man's room ? "

Duncan led the way out of the room across the corridor and stopped in front of a closed door.

" In there ! " he whispered and handed his torch to the superintendent. " You go in. I don't think I'd like to see it."

Liddell waved him aside, and pushing the door fumbled for the electric switch. With a visible squaring of his broad shoulders, as if preparing himself for a disagreeable sight, he crossed the threshold as the light flooded the room. Duncan, standing in the corridor, saw him stop short and stare blankly around him, but the young man made no movement to follow.

" Come in, man ! " the superintendent whispered hoarsely. " I can't make this out."

Duncan, with a feeling of repugnance which he could not conquer, obeyed, and looked in the direction of the police officer's glance. A large bed was there, but —it was empty ! He looked round the room. The room was in a state of indescribable disorder. Pillows and blankets were scattered on the floor around the bed. The mattress, with the sheet in disarray, lay half-off and half-on the bedstead. A bottle of some hair lotion had been overturned on the dressing-table, and through its unscrewed top the reddish liquid—vaguely reminiscent of blood—dripped steadily down on the thick carpet. But there was no sign of any human form—dead or alive.

" By Jove ! " Duncan exclaimed. " There's been some row here ! "

" Yes, indeed," Liddell replied. " But what I should like to——"

"Gentlemen! Jimmy? You?—— What is the meaning of this?"

They wheeled round and saw framed in the doorway the figure of a tall girl in the early twenties, clad in a silk dressing-gown, with hair in long auburn plaits, and flashing dark brown eyes which repeated the spoken demand as she surveyed the two disreputable invaders before her.

CHAPTER III

A FAMILY QUARREL

DUNCAN was the first to recover the use of his tongue, though only to a somewhat limited extent.

"Oh!" he stammered, "Kitty! I'm so sorry, but we saw—that is to say Superintendent Liddell saw—— Oh! tell her what you saw!" he finished lamely, turning to his companion.

Liddell, looking as embarrassed as he felt, advanced.

"I am Superintendent Liddell," he began, "of the County Police Force. From my bedroom at 'Ocean View' on the other side of the bay, I saw an attack being made on a gentleman in this room, and——"

"Indeed!" Miss Tretheway interrupted, "But I fail to see how that entitled you and Mr. Duncan to break into this house and——"

Liddell's face was rapidly assuming a crimson hue, and his pale blue eyes began to light up angrily. He was all the more angry because he knew that there was some justification for the girl's remark.

"Oh, but we didn't break in," Duncan explained hurriedly. "The front door wasn't locked."

"Really?" This time the girl seemed astonished, though Liddell's previous statement did not seem to have moved her. "But where is father? Why isn't he here?"

"We can't find Charlie either," Duncan went on.

"I know"—Miss Tretheway dismissed the remark with indifference—"Charlie's gone. But where is father, I ask?"

"That's——" the young man began, when Liddell laid his hand on his arm.

"Excuse me, Miss Tretheway," he said. "I repeat what I have already said. I saw an attack being made on the occupant of this room. I am a police-officer, and as such I have come over here. As to the propriety or legality of the methods I have employed to effect an entrance this is not the place for discussion nor am I to be cross-examined. We—that is to say Mr. Duncan and myself—are as anxious as you are to discover the whereabouts of your father. We do not know where he is, but it is evident that something serious has happened. When I saw him last he had been thrown across this bed and seemed incapable of movement, and now—well, look at the state of the room!"

The girl seemed to notice for the first time the disorder. Her eyes widened and she became deadly pale. With a gasp finally she sank to a chair near the door.

"In the circumstances," Liddell went on more gently, "I think it might be as well, Miss Tretheway, if you asked Mrs. Tretheway to see us."

"I— No— Mother is very unwell," the girl stammered, "and cannot be disturbed. And—and—I'm very sorry to be so silly, but you frightened me, and I want to—I should like to know what you saw—what happened here."

Liddell sat down on the side of the disordered bed and pulled a blanket over his pyjama-clad legs, which were now feeling the effect of the wetting they had received."

"We are wasting time, I suppose," he said. "But there is very little we can do just now, so I'd better tell you. From my window I saw a light come up in this room, and as there seemed to be some movement to and fro I was inquisitive enough to focus my field-glasses on the house. I saw a man in a grey suit with a very distinctive dark pointed beard holding an elderly

man in night attire—presumably your father—by the throat and shaking him backwards and forwards like a dog shakes a rat. The last time I looked I saw the elderly man lying on the bed and the other man was standing over him looking down at him. It seemed to me that a third person was present, but if so he was not visible to me; in any case, it is only an impression. I came over as fast as I could, but we were delayed by the tide having covered the beach. That is all. Now, if there has been a family quarrel which has had no serious consequences, I have no business here, but I must insist on being satisfied that such is the case. Can you give me any information on the point, Miss Tretheway?"

While the superintendent was speaking, the girl's face gave no clue to her thoughts. Only at the mention of the man with the pointed beard she appeared to be about to interrupt, but Liddell had prevented her with raised hand.

"I know nothing," she now said. "I cannot understand what can have happened."

"Very strange," the police-officer commented. "The happenings in this room obviously caused a lot of noise. How is it that nobody in the house has heard anything?"

"Mother and I live in the opposite wing," Miss Tretheway explained dully. "Besides, listen to the sea! That would prevent us from hearing! Oh! Where can father be? Let us search the other rooms. Perhaps he is in one of them. But come softly. We must not disturb mother."

Liddell rose in acceptance of the suggestion. The search was conducted quietly but speedily. Every room in the house was visited with the exception of two occupied by sleeping servants, and Mrs. Tretheway's room. When they returned to the disordered bedroom Liddell said:

"Perhaps Mr. Tretheway is in your mother's room."

"No," the girl replied. "I had just come from there when——"

"Oh, by the way," the superintendent interrupted, "why did you come here? We made no noise. I thought also that you could hear nothing from the other wing."

Miss Tretheway's reply was not immediately forthcoming, nor was it without embarrassment that she finally said:

"When I went to my room from mother's I saw the light shining on the cliff from here, and I came to see if father wanted anything."

"Then the fact of a light here at this hour is unusual?" Liddell asked.

"Y—yes," was the girl's reply made with a hesitation which the police-officer pretended to ignore, for he passed to another subject.

"And your cousin, Mr. Aylward?" he asked. "You said he was gone. Where? And when did he go?"

"He went between twelve and half-past," she answered. "He said that he would sleep at Wadebridge or Bodmin."

"How did he go?"

"In his two-seater."

"What on earth made him leave at such an unearthly hour, and on such a night?"

The girl made a gesture of helplessness.

"I suppose you'd better know," she replied. "He had a quarrel with father and left immediately after."

"What!" the superintendent exclaimed. "He rose from his bed to quarrel with your father?"

"I didn't know," Miss Tretheway stammered, "that he had been in bed. How do you know?"

"We saw his room," Liddell explained briefly. "There is no doubt about his having gone to bed. Do you know the reason for the quarrel?"

"No. I cannot understand it. Mother knows, I think, but she wouldn't tell me when I asked her."

"Then you were not present at the quarrel?"

"No."

"H'm!" Liddell reflected. "Well, all this is very strange. I don't mind telling you that I am in a quandary, Miss Tretheway. There are discrepancies between the story you tell and the things I myself saw. They may be capable of a very simple explanation, but I don't know—I don't know. Either something very serious has happened or it is not a police matter at all. I don't understand it at all. Honestly I don't."

While the superintendent was giving expression to his bewilderment the girl had been looking round the room. Suddenly, just as he finished speaking, she ran across the floor and drew from beneath a blanket a pyjama jacket.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "That is part of father's nightsuit!"

"Yes!" Duncan added, after stooping to look under the bed. "And here are the pants."

"Then," the girl decided with relief in her voice, "he was not badly hurt, and he dressed and went out. You see! His clothes are not here!"

"Went out!" Liddell exclaimed. "What for?"

Miss Tretheway sighed.

"After a quarrel," she said, "he has often gone out for a run in his car."

"What! Even at night?"

The girl nodded.

"Well!" Liddell said, rising, "that ought to be easy to verify. Where is the garage?"

The girl also rose and led the way into the corridor. When they reached the front door, in her relief she found herself smiling at the sight of the men donning their boots over bare feet. She herself was in thin bedroom slippers, but when Duncan had switched on his torch she led the men to the back of the house where a garage door stood open.

"That is what has happened," she said, pressing

an electric button and flooding the garage with light. "Look! Only the Napier is there! Both Charlie's and father's two-seaters are gone. Oh, I am so glad that it is nothing more serious."

Liddell said nothing, but examined closely the garage interior. Miss Tretheway looked at him anxiously.

"You don't think so, Mr. Liddell?"

"I hope for the best, Miss Tretheway," he replied. "In any case I don't think I can do anything more here. But when you see your cousin again, tell him to restrain his violent impulses when he quarrels. He'll be getting himself into trouble one of these days if he doesn't."

The girl made no reply to this and the two men took their leave. The rain had ceased and a fitful moon peered forth now and then between scudding clouds as they wended their way back over the cliffs. The sea was more calm and they saw the flickering light and the dim shadow of a sail as it glided out northward past Pentire Headland.

"A nasty night for setting mackerel lines!" Duncan commented.

Superintendent Liddell, lost in thought, grunted.

CHAPTER IV

FAMILY HISTORY

WHEN they reached the boarding-house peace again reigned there. All the rooms were in darkness. Only a night light shining through the fanlight over the front door showed that they were expected back. As their crunching footsteps approached, the door opened before them and they saw Miss Tansey standing on the upper step. She looked a hundred questions, but Liddell passed her without a word. He had been silent all the way across the cliffs and was in no humour to volunteer information to the inquisitive mistress of the " Paying Guest Establishment." Duncan followed him, equally silent. When they reached the top of the stairs the superintendent addressed his companion.

" Come in to my room as soon as you have changed into dry clothes," he invited. " I've got a drop of something to warm us up."

The young man accepted willingly and in a minute he had replaced his mackintosh and boots by a dressing-gown and slippers and was waiting, tooth glass in hand, while Liddell changed into dry pyjamas. When the whiskey had been poured out the police officer remarked :

" We did look a pair of asses when the young lady came in."

" Somewhat," was Duncan's laconic and rather glum reply.

Liddell was silent for a moment as he sipped his drink.

" Do you know," he said finally, " I'm not at all satisfied about to-night's business."

"Why?" the young man asked.

"I cannot exactly say why," the superintendent replied. "But I don't think Miss Tretheway was telling us all she knew."

"Oh!" Duncan exclaimed indignantly.

"In any case," Liddell went on. "On one matter she was not consistent."

"What was that?"

"Well! She told us that it was unusual for a light to be in her father's room at that hour, yet almost in the same breath she said that her father often went out in his car after a quarrel even when it was late. He didn't go out or come in without putting on a few lights, I'll lay."

Duncan was silent for a moment.

"Yes," he said then. "That does seem contradictory, but I don't think there's anything in it. The whole thing is just a family squabble that she doesn't want to discuss with strangers. Charlie Aylward is a quiet fellow until roused, as he probably was to-night; the old boy can be a pretty poisonous bounder when he likes. So you have the makings of a fine quarrel. After the row Charlie dresses and says he won't sleep in the damned house any more, then toddles off in his two-seater, too angry to bother about the weather. The old chap was probably only a bit winded in the fight and when he recovered he also went for a spin in *his* two-seater to cool off. There you are! That's what has happened as sure as a gun."

"You seem to know them well," the superintendent remarked, making no comment on the youth's deductions.

"Yes," Duncan nodded. "Charlie and I were at school together and we still see a lot of each other at Cambridge. I've often stayed with them when they had a place near Bodmin, but here I preferred not to. I can't stand old Tretheway, to tell you the truth."

"I'm new to this part of the country," the policeman

said, " and I know very little about the people around here. Who is this Tretheway ? What is he ? Is he rich ? Does he farm ? "

Duncan laughed at the string of questions and finished his whiskey.

" Have another peg," Liddell invited and forthwith poured out a generous helping.

" Old Tretheway," the young man replied, " is—as far as I know—the son of a gardener from somewhere near Truro. He ran away from home as a boy of sixteen or seventeen, and, it seems, wandered about the world a few years before finally landing in China, where in the course of a few years he appears to have made pots of money—how I don't know. The country people in this part of the world will tell you that it wasn't made honestly, but then, you know, Cornishmen never have a good word to say for anybody who——"

The superintendent smiled.

" Oh ! Sorry ! " Duncan stopped in embarrassment. " You are a Cornishman yourself and——"

" Yes," Liddell interrupted, " I am, and I know my fellow countrymen. I must say that you're nearly right, so don't apologise. Go on ! "

" Then," the young man continued, " Tretheway came home and bought a place near Bodmin, and in a year, I am told, the whole county was flabbergasted to hear that he was engaged to a Miss Aylward—one of the most beautiful girls in the West of England, of very good family but as poor as a church mouse. Of course all this is ancient history——"

" I understand," the superintendent broke in, " So Mrs. Tretheway is an Aylward—not one of the Aylwards of Cardinham ? "

" That's the family," Duncan went on. " Anyhow, he married her, and Kitty—that is, Miss Tretheway—was born. There were no sons. About five years ago he sold the Bodmin Estate and bought that big barrack of a place on the cliff, The Mouls House—Heaven knows why, for the other place was much

nicer. Said he wanted to be near the sea, I believe—— Well, there you are ! "

" Yes," the superintendent agreed. " There we are. But this Charlie Aylward ? How does he come into the picture ? "

" Oh, Charlie's the son of an elder brother of Mrs. Tretheway, as I think I told you. His father and mother died when he was quite a kid, so his aunt took care of his education and all that sort of thing. He and old Tretheway never got on very well, especially of late, in fact, since they came here to Polreath."

" Why does a young fellow like that wear a beard ? " Liddell asked.

" Oh, that ! " Duncan laughed. " That is to cover a scar on his chin. He split it open in a fall a few years ago. We rag him a lot about that beard. When the ' Beaver ' craze was on he had a thin time of it. It's a funny beard too. He has to comb it carefully to hide the scar where no hair grows, and——"

" From what you say," the superintendent interrupted, " I gather that Tretheway is not precisely a popular character in this part of the world."

" Popular ? " Duncan exclaimed. " I don't know a soul who has a good word to say for him."

" Why is that ? "

" Well, you see, he really is an awful bounder. Everybody in the place knows his origin, but he imagines himself to be the big noise round here—sort of lord of the manor stunt—and thinks that everybody should kow-tow to him. Then he has got everybody's back up by hounding people off the cliffs at the back of his house, though Heaven knows what harm they do strolling along the old coastguard path."

" How does he get on with Mrs. Tretheway ? " Liddell further catechised.

" Well, that's a difficult question," Duncan replied. " If one were to judge by her attitude on the surface

one might think that everything was all right. But as a matter of fact, I know that he is no different at home from what he is outside, but he gets away with it better—for the sake of peace. He does the autocratic stunt, thumps the table and all that, and the womenfolk keep mum. But they suffer, I know that, though they try not to let him or anybody else see it. I'm sure that's why Mrs. Tretheway was ill to-night. There must have been a hell of a row, for she was all right this afternoon when I saw her."

"I must say," Liddell commented, "he's not at all an attractive individual, from what you say. Are any of his own people alive?"

"There's one old maiden sister," Duncan replied. "A very fine old character. She lives in a poor way somewhere near St. Breward. Wouldn't accept any money from her brother. She says it isn't clean money, whatever she means by that. Mrs. Tretheway and she are very fond of each other, and the old boy seems to be ashamed of her or afraid of her, I don't know which. Anyhow, she is the only person I know who is not afraid of him. She's one of those very primitive methodists or something like that, who has added a few more commandments to the Decalogue such as 'Thou shalt not smoke.' She told me one day that she disapproved of the Prince of Wales because she saw a postcard picture of him with a cigarette in his mouth. Every time she meets her brother she lectures him on what she calls his evil ways."

"Why?" the superintendent asked. "Has he any particular vices?"

"H'm! A few! I shouldn't be surprised if Charlie Aylward's row with him to-night wasn't caused by the indulgence in one of them. He'd go off the deep end if he thought his aunt was being slighted by the old boy in—well, you know what I mean."

The superintendent rose.

"Yes," he said, "I know what you mean. So he's

that sort, is he ? Well, thanks very much. I'll drive you off to bed now, for I'm sleepy. Thank goodness that toothache's gone. I hope we'll hear no more of any trouble over there, though I'm not optimistic."

" I hope your pessimism won't be justified," Duncan replied. " Good-night ! "

CHAPTER V

AT THE FOOT OF THE CLIFF

AT nine o'clock, having bathed and breakfasted, Jimmy Duncan burst into Superintendent Liddell's room to find that worthy lazily yawning and stretching himself before the window.

"Superintendent," he called out excitedly, "Get a move on! There's something wrong over there, after all."

Liddell jumped.

"I knew it," he exclaimed. "I felt that things weren't right. But what's the latest?"

"This!" Duncan replied, handing over a mauve-tinted sheet of notepaper. "It was brought over as I was finishing breakfast."

The superintendent took the paper and read:

"DEAR JIMMY,

"Kitty has told me of your visit here during the night. Come over here as soon as you can and bring your police friend with you. Amos has not yet returned.

"Yours sincerely,
"ESTHER TRETHEWAY."

"From Mrs. Tretheway?" Liddell asked. "Who is Amos? Old Tretheway?"

Duncan nodded.

The police officer at once began to show signs of greater activity.

"Run down," he said, "and see if you can persuade Miss Tansey to let me have a breakfast tray up here in

double-quick time. By the time it's ready I shall be ready too."

The young man ran to obey and returned almost immediately to announce his success. He had found when downstairs that the rumour had already got abroad that everything was not as it should be at the house on the cliff.

"I wonder what can have happened," he remarked as he sat watching the superintendent vigorously towelling himself.

"Lord knows!" Liddell replied jerkily. "Shouldn't be surprised if the old chap ran his car into something in his rage."

"Humph!" Jimmy grunted. "I hope it's nothing worse than that."

The superintendent stopped with one arm half-way into a shirt sleeve.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "You think the nephew has put him out of the way, after all?"

Duncan shook his head.

"I don't know what to think," he replied. "I can't forget what you saw last night. I don't suppose many tears would be shed over the passing of Amos Tretheway, but I'd rather he did it in the way you say than have Charlie Aylward mixed in it."

A knock at the door intervened. At a sign from Liddell the young man opened it and took from the hands of Miss Tansey herself a breakfast tray, the contents of which the superintendent hastily attacked while he finished his toilet.

"M'yes!" he said, munching a piece of toast. "But don't get into a panic about it. Remember that old Tretheway recovered sufficiently to dress and go out."

"But did he?" Duncan asked.

"Oh, I see what you mean," Liddell exclaimed. "You think the nephew may have dressed him and then removed him?"

The young man nodded gloomily.

"Then," continued the superintendent, "how do you account for the two cars being absent from the garage? Aylward couldn't drive both. Or if he did he couldn't get far away with them unnoticed. One two-seater towed by another would be noticed at any garage he stopped at."

"I know," Jimmy objected. "But you haven't——"

Liddell stood up and reached for his hat and stick.

"Come on," he interrupted. "No use making surmises. Let's go over and see what Mrs. Tretheway has to say."

The tide being out, the full beauty of Polreath beach as a children's playground was disclosed as the two men left "Ocean View." They found the journey to the other side shortened by half in comparison with that of the night before.

"Ridiculous!" Liddell commented, "that there should be no road except that cliff path between Old and New Polreath!"

"Yes," Duncan agreed. "When you think that the grocer's Ford has to go about a mile and a half round to deliver us our groceries! But that's some of the local politics which you will come across very soon."

When they reached the front door of the house on the cliff they found Kitty Tretheway awaiting them. Dressed in a serviceable costume which did not hide any of the perfections of her youthful frame, she looked what she was—a healthy young specimen of a refined Cornish girl. The superintendent reflected that if her father was coarse and uncouth no trace of these defects was visible in his daughter. She greeted them quietly.

"Mother is in the writing-room," she announced. "Will you come in?"

They followed her into a room whose refinement the police-officer found almost embarrassing. Every article in it showed feminine taste. Evidently this

was not a room much used by the master of the house. Yet there was in it an almost masculine comfort which blended well with the womanly touches. The woman who rose to greet them was at first glance almost youthful in appearance. Closer study, however, showed that in spite of the freshness of her complexion and the clearness of her large grey eyes, she could not have been less than fifty. Her hair was snow-white. When she spoke her voice was calm and well modulated.

"Good-morning, Jimmy," she said, and then turned to Liddell with a slight smile.

"Good-morning, Mr. Liddell," she addressed him. "My daughter has told me of your visit here during the night."

"Good-morning, ma'am," the superintendent replied, somehow—to his own astonishment—embarrassed at finding himself face to face with this unnaturally calm woman.

"Won't you sit down," Mrs. Tretheway invited, taking a seat herself. "I wish," she continued when the two men had obeyed, "to reverse our rôles for a moment, Mr. Liddell, and ask you to tell me what you saw from your window last night."

With the conscientiousness of a good police witness in the box Liddell described what he had seen. Mrs. Tretheway did not interrupt the narrative, but sat back in her chair with half-closed eyes.

"I am very sorry," she said when the superintendent had finished, "that my daughter did not tell me of your visit until this morning."

Nobody replied to this, and Mrs. Tretheway sat forward in her chair, thinking hard. The others waited in silence. Finally she asked:

"Can you fix the exact time at which you saw these happenings, Superintendent?"

"Within five or ten minutes, yes," Liddell replied. "About that much before, the boarding house clock downstairs struck one."

"H'm," said Mrs. Tretheway, as if talking to herself. "About five or ten minutes past one. Then I do not understand. Charlie—my nephew—left this house about—certainly not later than half-past twelve, and, therefore——"

"Excuse my interrupting, Mrs. Tretheway," Duncan broke in, "But the boarding-house clock also strikes the half-hours and——"

He stopped in embarrassment as he realised the implication contained in his remark, and saw that Kitty Tretheway realised it too. That young lady was looking at him with undisguised anger. At sight of her face, he continued lamely:

"It might have been half-past one that struck."

"Or half-past twelve," Mrs. Tretheway added calmly. "Oh, do not let us be afraid to face things."

"As a matter of fact," Liddell insisted, "it was one o'clock that struck. I am too old a policeman to make the statement without being sure. Besides, I had been awake with toothache and heard every half-hour striking since ten o'clock. However, if there is any doubt, it is a point that can be easily verified, for when I was coming out I roused the whole house. Several of the people are sure to have looked at their watches."

"I didn't," Duncan confessed.

"However," Liddell resumed, "that is not the point just now—at least as far as I am concerned. I understand that Mr. Tretheway is still absent."

"Yes," Mrs. Tretheway replied. "But I must confess that I was not unduly worried about that until I heard what you had seen. I thought that after the quarrel with my nephew my husband had gone off in his car. He has often done so before and has even stayed away all night, putting up, I suppose, in a hotel in one of the neighbouring towns when he was tired driving."

"And now?" Liddell asked as she paused.

"And now," she continued, "I do not know what to think. The man you saw could not have been my

nephew, firstly because of the hour, and secondly—I am surprised that you did not think of this, Jimmy—he could never have overcome my husband in the way you saw. My husband could have broken him with one blow."

"By Jove, yes," Duncan exclaimed. "I never thought of that. Mr. Tretheway was as strong as six of Charlie."

"Nevertheless," Liddell objected, "whoever it was overcame him. And the man I saw had a pointed beard like your nephew's and was slimly built. You must take into account the fact that Mr. Tretheway had been taken unawares when he was probably half-asleep."

"I don't agree with you there," Kitty Tretheway declared. "He could not have been half asleep because half-an-hour before he was quarrelling with Charlie and was very angry. He never cooled down so quickly as that."

"I appreciate the point," Liddell smiled. "But what I saw is evidence that Mr. Tretheway was overcome. But all this discussion is getting us nowhere! What has to be done now, I take it, is to find Mr. Tretheway. For that reason I should like to ask a few questions. Mrs. Tretheway, could your husband's car be taken out of the garage without you hearing it?"

"Yes," Mrs. Tretheway replied. "My bedroom faces the sea. I always keep my window wide open and the noise of the waves drowns all other sounds, even noises in the corridor."

"So that," Liddell continued, "in that case you would not be aware of any commotion in your husband's room?"

"Quite!" she replied in a harder voice than she had yet betrayed. "My room is in the opposite wing. It is the corresponding room on the other side of the house and looks south, whilst my husband's looks north towards Pentire."

There was silence for some moments.

"May I ask," Liddell then asked, "what was the reason for Mr. Aylward's sudden departure—for I conclude it was sudden?"

"It was due," Mrs. Tretheway answered after a pause, "to a particularly violent quarrel between him and my husband."

"And the cause of the quarrel?"

"That I am afraid I cannot tell you," she replied. "It is a private matter. I can only say—though it costs me a great deal to do so—that I approve entirely of my nephew's attitude."

The superintendent was mystified but did not press the point.

"Another question," he said, "have these night journeys of your husband any particular object, or are they merely a means of cooling off—so to speak—after a scene?"

Mrs. Tretheway stiffened and in an icy tone replied: "That also is a question which I must leave unanswered for the present."

The superintendent rose.

"I am rather puzzled," he said bluntly, "as to what you want me to do. Do you want me to have a search instituted for Mr. Tretheway? If so, you are volunteering extremely little help."

"My attitude must indeed appear strange to you," Mrs. Tretheway replied, also rising. "I must appear to you cold and indifferent as to what has happened to my husband. I cannot explain. But with regard to what I want you to do"—she paused for a moment—"Yes. If you think my husband has met with foul play search for him by all means. If he has not he will not thank either of us for our efforts afterwards, but—well, that cannot be helped—yes, Mr. Liddell, find my husband, wherever he may be."

With her daughter she accompanied the two men as far as the front door. Liddell, before turning to take his leave began to examine the drive for tyre

marks, but the night's heavy rain had completely effaced any that might have been made in the loose gravel. He looked up from the ground at the sound of steps coming from the outer gate, and saw advancing towards them a squat little man, dressed somewhat like a naval petty officer. At closer quarters the monogram of his cap badge proved him to be a coast-guard. Duncan recognised him as the man in charge of the station at Trebetherick—a short mile further south along the coast.

"Mrs. Tretheway, ma'am?" he inquired, touching his cap.

"I am Mrs. Tretheway," that lady replied, somewhat tremulously. "What is it?"

"It's this way, ma'am," the man began in some embarrassment, "I was starting on my round awhile back along the cliff path. I was standing on the cliff below our look-out and—and—all of a sudden-like I see a motor-car lyin' down below in the water with the wheels in the air."

"What's that?" Liddell broke in.

Mrs. Tretheway, for all her previous calm, was showing signs of faintness. Her daughter and Duncan ran to her assistance, but she waved them away. The coastguard waited until she recovered sufficiently to tell him to continue.

"I climbed down, ma'am, and—I may be wrong—but it looks to me like your car, the small one that I see Mr. Tretheway goin' about in."

"Did you see the number?" Liddell asked.

"Yes, sir. I wrote it down too. It's A.F. 68432."

"That's father's," Miss Tretheway exclaimed, and put her hand to her breast.

"Did you find any signs of a body?" the superintendent asked.

"Not a sign, sir, but you see, sir, the tide——"

"'Sh!" Liddell cautioned and turned to Mrs. Tretheway.

"I shall go to the spot at once," he said to her.

" And on my return I'll let you know what I find. Miss Tretheway, take your mother indoors. She is feeling faint."

" I must 'phone up St. Minfred," the coastguard volunteered, as he turned to leave them. " This is a police matter, I'm thinking, and that's where the constable lives."

" You needn't worry," Liddell assured him. " It's a police matter all right, but I'm the police. Come on. Show me this car."

CHAPTER VI

ON THE CLIFF TOP

"I'M going with you," Jimmy decided when the two women had gone into the house.

"No, you are not," Liddell said decisively. "I have a job of work for you. Go down to the Post Office and 'phone Wadebridge Police Station. Tell Inspector Straker from me to find out if young Aylward slept at any of the Wadebridge or Bodmin hotels, and to pass the word on to Camelford and other places. Tell him about this business—just an outline, you know—and say that I want him to come out here as soon as he possibly can with a man or two. When you have done that try and get on to the St. Minfred constable and send him after me."

"Right-oh!" the young man agreed and swung off. "But I am coming after you when I've finished."

"Please yourself about that," Liddell replied. "But keep quiet about this business or we'll have the whole countryside on our heels."

"Not a word." Jimmy promised.

After ten minutes walk up the hill towards Trebetherick, the superintendent and the coastguard reached the cliff at the foot of which lay the wrecked two-seater. The iron railing which the Duchy authorities had thought prudent to erect along the edge lay flat for nearly a hundred yards to right and left on this — one of the most dangerous spots on a dangerous coast. To Liddell's question the coastguard replied that it had been in this state for months past in spite of his repeated reports on the matter.

The cliff itself rose like a wall from the sea, and

even now, though it was not high tide, the waves were within a few feet of its base. They looked over—the superintendent somewhat nervously—and saw the four wheels of the car directly below. Liddell reflected that in the somersault there was little likelihood of the driver not having been thrown clear.

"How on earth did you see the number or the make of the car?" he asked the coastguard.

"I climbed down there," the man explained pointing to a sloping mass of rock further along.

"Can I get down that way?"

"Yes," the coastguard replied. "It's easy going. But you can't get to the car without wetting your feet."

"Can't be helped," Liddell rejoined. "Let's go down."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," his guide restrained him. "It's none o' my business, I know, but a man can't help seein' things. I didn't like to say anything up to the house, but I'm thinkin' that car was shoved over the cliff."

Liddell looked at the man. He himself had seen nothing to indicate how the thing had happened.

"What makes you think that?" he asked.

"First of all," the coastguard pointed out, "she's turned heels over head, and she's almost touching the base of the cliff. Shows she was goin' slow."

"How do you make that out?"

"If she'd bein' goin' full speed ahead, sir, she'd 'a' jumped right out into the water. Maybe she'd 'a' turned over and maybe no—but look 'ee here, sir"—the coastguard stooped well over the edge of the cliff—"you can see from the way the earth on the cliff top is torn that her front wheels just slipped down the face of the rock and she heeled over. When we go down I'll show you where she bumped when she turned."

"You are observant, anyhow," Liddell remarked.

"I had a good look round, sir," the man replied complacently.

" But I'm not sure of your deductions," the superintendent continued.

" My what, sir ? "

" What I mean is," Liddell explained, " that what you say merely proves that the car was going at a slow rate of speed, but from that to being ' shoved over ' there's a long way. On a dark night it would be easy to drive over by accident.'"

" With headlights, sir ? " the coastguard exclaimed. " Not with them lights o' Mr. Tretheway's. Besides, you come over here, sir. I'll show you something else."

He strode back to the path leading from the lookout hut to the cliff, and stooped over a slab of slate.

" I put this here," he said, " to keep the track from being destroyed."

He lifted the slab.

" See ! " he pointed to the depression in the sticky clay. " That's a footprint—left foot—and a gent's boot, too. Got no nails in it "—advancing a step he lifted another slab—" and here's another—the fellow to it. See how he slithered and dug in deep on one side. He was pushin' hard, that chap, he was."

Liddell looked closely and after a moment nodded.

" I believe you are right," he said.

" Yes. I'm right," the coastguard affirmed with certainty. " I'm not a detectative—not me, but I know what's what. And that's not all. On the starboard side another bloke was doin' ditto—pushin' that is. Look 'ee here. Good thing there's clay here ! It's not so easy to wipe out tracks as in ordinary mud."

On the other side of the road he moved three slabs, disclosing more footmarks—filled with water, these, for the ground was more flat. Liddell's face was set.

" Put these stones back," he ordered. " We'll have to take casts of these marks."

The coastguard obeyed and then looked at the sky while he wiped his hands.

" Better do it soon, sir," he said. " We'll soon be

having more rain, and them tracks won't last for ever. I've got some plaster o' Paris up at the station if that'll help."

"It will not only help, it'll do the trick," Liddell replied. "But let s get down to the car first."

The coastguard leading, they crossed a stile into a field and went down the sloping rock.

"You ought to have been a policeman," the superintendent commented as they scrambled down.

"What for?" the man asked laughing. "'Cos I can use my eyes? Larned that in the Navy, sir. I'd rather have my job than a bobby's, any day."

Arrived at the bottom they waded almost thigh deep to the overturned car.

"Can't see much now, sir," the coastguard remarked. "The tide's on the flood again. But this morning I prodded in with a stick and barrin' a rug or something like that, there's nothing underneath."

"We'll have to get it out of this for examination, somehow," Liddell commented, looking up at the slatey face of the cliff where, indeed, a number of white scratches of considerable dimensions showed more than half-way up. "I don't know how we are going to do it."

"You leave that to my mate and me, sir," the man of the sea replied easily. "We'll rig up some sort of a derrick and get her out o' that."

"All right," Liddell approved. "Let us go up now and see about that plaster of Paris of yours."

As they ascended the rock, the superintendent, unused to such exertion, paused to take breath and looked again at the face of the cliff. It was a side view that he got and he saw that there were a few ledges. Suddenly he uttered a cry which made the coastguard turn round.

"Look!" he said somewhat excitedly, pointing, "What's that? It looks like somebody lying there."

The spot he indicated was nearer to where they stood than the place where the car had toppled over. On

one of the shelves a dark object was faintly visible. The coastguard stared at it for a moment.

"It do look like a body," he muttered and began to undo the fastenings of a little haversack he carried. In a moment a pair of field-glasses were glued to his eyes.

"It's a coat," he decided, after a long look. "A fur coat, but there's nobody inside it."

Liddell reached for the glasses, and having studied the object, nodded.

"Yes," he said. "It's a fur coat. That's curious."

"Aye, so it is," the coastguard agreed. "How did it get there?"

"Heaven knows what anybody was doing with a fur coat at this time of the year!" the superintendent muttered.

"They weren't wearing it," said the coastguard. "And what's more, it was throwed there. It wasn't just blowed there from the falling car."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know? How do I know I'm alive? Just like that—I know, and you know, sir, as well as I do, that the wind never blows anything agin itself."

"Oh, I see," the superintendent exclaimed. "You mean that the wind was not blowing in that direction. I didn't know—or at least I hadn't thought of it."

"Ah!" said the coastguard, patronisingly, as he resumed his journey upward. "That's it, is it? You see, sir, it's part of my job to know it. That's why I say that coat was throwed there. With the car goin over an' all, and a gale blowin' off shore like it was last night, it should have been in the water and not on a shelf higher up than where the car overturned—judgin' by the marks—and twenty yards to one side."

"I see," Liddell replied. "We'll have to get hold of it, though."

"That'll be all right, sir. Us coastguards'll do that. We've got the tackle. You leave the car and the coat

to us. You'll be the new superintendent, sir? If so, you'll be able to let us have the help of a couple o' bobbies. Do 'em good, a bit o' real work!"

Liddell laughed.

"Yes," he said. "You can have a couple of constables as soon as I can get in touch with them, and you can work them as hard as you like."

"That's the ticket, sir," the coastguard grinned. "I hope Tom Treleaven'll be one of them."

"Who's he?"

"There he is, sir. He had me up the other day for ridin' a bike without a light, when the wind had only just blowed it out."

As they approached the path they saw a young constable standing by a motor-cycle near the edge of the cliff, and wiping the inside of his helmet with his handkerchief. He stopped when he saw the coastguard cross the stile. The superintendent was not yet visible to him.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Some joker 'phoned me up and told me to come out to the coastguard station. Said some superintendent or other wanted me. Who the——"

"That'll do, sonny," said Liddell, appearing above his head. "I'm the superintendent. You're the lad that's stationed at St. Minfred, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," the constable replied, trying to salute and replace his helmet at the same time and succeeding only in overturning his motor-cycle with a clatter.

"Well, then," his superior ordered, "your job now is to stay here and let nobody approach within fifty yards of this spot until I give the word. Afterwards, you will stand by and lend a hand at whatever work's to be done."

As Liddell and the coastguard walked up to the Trebetherick coastguard station, the former said with a smile:

"I think you're right. That boy needs a job of real hard work. He looks soft."

"Aye, sir," the other replied. "He's soft, but it's in the head. Rare fond of hisself he is! To me he looks funny to-day, though, as if he was boozin', or something all night—not that he does booze, I will say that. He's a steady young chap, all right, but he looks green about the gills this morning."

"Perhaps he was up all night—night patrol, you know," Liddell excused his subordinate.

"Aye, that must be it."

CHAPTER VII

FUR COAT AND CARD CASE

THE coastguard—who to Liddell's inquiry gave his name as Bill Maunders—having provided the plaster of Paris, the taking of the casts of the footprints was quickly finished. The results were not eminently satisfactory owing to the fact that both wearers of the boots impressed had slipped in the wet clay, but, as the superintendent reflected, they were better than nothing. Leaving Maunders to arrange for and superintend the erection of tackle for the raising of the car, with Constable Treleaven as assistant, Liddell wended his way thoughtfully over the hill back to Polreath. There he was closeted for half-an-hour in the telephone booth at the little grocery-post-office on the beach. As he came out he met young Duncan, who had come in search of him to report that he had sent the messages entrusted to him, and that the inspector from Wadebridge was coming.

"Thanks!" Liddell replied. "We shall have more than him here soon. I have just been talking to the Chief Constable and he wants to get a Scotland Yard man down."

"Why?" Duncan asked. "Haven't you got men of your own?"

"Yes, but the Chief Constable seems to think that this business is too much for them. You see, he is an old London policeman himself."

"The case seems simple enough to me, unfortunately," the young man murmured glumly.

"It does, does it?" Liddell replied. "Well,

perhaps so, but I'm not so sure. Were you going up to the house ? "

Duncan nodded.

" So am I," the superintendent answered. " Though I'd like to go and change, but I want to get a good look at old Tretheway's room before they touch it."

" I knew you would," the young man exclaimed. " I told Miss Tretheway so, but she——"

He stopped.

" But she what ? " Liddell asked. " Do you mean to say that she has meddled with it ? "

" Meddled with it ! " Duncan laughed bitterly. " Man, they're having a regular spring cleaning of it—though it is autumn ! "

The police-officer hurried forward.

" What the——" he began. " Did it o' purpose, I suppose, eh ? Trying to cover up her cousin's tracks, I'll lay. She forgets that I saw him."

Duncan made no reply, but walked by Liddell's side in silent though unwilling agreement. The latter, on arriving at the house, ran up the stairs without ceremony and walked straight to the wing, where the missing man's room was situated. He halted in front of the open door. A maid, with Miss Tretheway's help, was putting the last touches to a counterpane on the bed. They stopped and stared at him.

" Why have you done this ? " Liddell asked severely.

" Done what ? " the girl replied tremulously but with a touch of defiance.

" You know very well what I mean. This room should not have been touched until it was examined thoroughly."

" You did not say so," Miss Tretheway countered.

The superintendent made a sign to the servant to withdraw. She obeyed, after a look at her young mistress.

" No, Miss Tretheway," Liddell replied, when the maid had gone. " I did not say so, but I trusted—foolishly, it seems, to your intelligence and honour."

The girl seemed about to give voice to her indignation at the rudeness of the remark, but the police-officer held up his hand.

"Now, Miss Tretheway," he said, "you *are* an intelligent young lady, and as such I would ask you to believe that I am not altogether a fool, though I am only an old country policeman. You are in your heart of hearts afraid that your cousin is responsible for your father's disappearance, and for some reason you have done a thing which seems very strange for a daughter to do. You have tried to obliterate all traces of what happened in this room, but you——"

"No!" the girl interrupted vehemently, "Charlie—my cousin—did not hurt father, I'm sure."

"Well," Liddell, replied, "by your morning's work you have done your best to give me the impression that you believe the contrary. But, as I was about to say, you forget what I saw from my window. Until the contrary is proved, I am convinced that I saw Charles Aylward strangle your father, and if he did not, don't you realise that by cleaning up this room you have perhaps destroyed some clue which might have been the means of clearing him from the suspicion?"

The girl was silent for a moment, and then, sitting down on the bed, burst into tears. Liddell turned away and looked out to sea.

"I don't know what to think," Miss Tretheway at last said. "I don't know what is going on in this house. Everybody is unhappy, everybody!"

The superintendent made no comment, preferring to listen. He might learn something.

"Everybody quarrelling with everybody else!" she went on spasmodically. "And I am treated like a baby! No one will tell me what is wrong."

"And you cannot guess?" Liddell ventured, thinking like the soft-hearted father of a family that he was, that the girl before him was indeed like a very heart-broken child in her grief.

"No," she replied. "Everything was all right—at least I think so—until last year, when I came home from finishing school in Brussels. Then mother was sad and father was always in a bad temper."

"And your cousin?"

"Oh, he wasn't here then. He was up at Cambridge. When he came down in June he was on good terms with father, but last month—in August—he and father had several rows."

The superintendent coughed.

"You were not the subject of these rows, by any chance?" he asked.

"I?"—she opened her eyes in astonishment. "Oh! I see what you mean. No, there can be no question of that whatever."

During the silence which ensued, Liddell examined the room only to find that everything had been cleaned and polished like a new pin. It seemed to him that every object likely to take finger-prints had been specially attended to. He turned to go out of the room.

"Oh, Mr. Liddell!" the girl, now dry of eye, stopped him. "Do tell me what you are going to do."

"I'm afraid I cannot do that, Miss Tretheway," he replied, "for I really don't know myself. Matters will probably be taken out of my hands in any case."

"But father's car?" she asked. "Have you seen it? There is no——"

"No." Liddell shook his head. "No trace of anything. Just the car at the foot of the cliff and a fur coat——"

"A fur coat?"

The superintendent nodded.

"But—but father didn't wear one at this time of the year," the girl assured him. "It cannot be his."

"It may not," Liddell admitted. "But he may have worn it last night. It was a rough night, you will remember, blowing a gale and none too warm for driving."

"You are contradicting yourself, Mr. Liddell," Miss Tretheway reminded him with a wan smile. "Remember that you have already come to the conclusion that father was not in a condition to drive."

The superintendent looked foolish for a moment.

"That is quite true," he agreed after a moment's thought, "but we must think of every possibility. When the coat is recovered from the cliff wall we shall know definitely whether it is Mr. Tretheway's or not. In the meantime we can look here in the house to see if your father's coat is still among his clothes."

"It is packed away in moth balls since last winter," the girl assured him.

"Where?"

"In a room upstairs. An attic."

"Now, just to make sure," Liddell proposed, "since we are here, let us go up to that attic, and you can tell me whether that coat is missing or not."

Miss Tretheway agreed to this and led the way up a narrow flight of stairs into a small room with a sloping ceiling. As they entered, a strong smell of naphthaline, or some such pungent composition, greeted them. Round the walls hung a number of white sacks to which hanging labels were attached.

"You see," the girl said, pointing to the label which she was reading, "father's fur coat is in this bag."

Liddell felt the sack with groping fingers.

"Yes," he admitted after a moment. "This is undoubtedly a fur coat. Of course we shall have to rip the sack open in order to make sure that it is Mr. Tretheway's, but in the meantime we can leave it, if you will please lock the door and give me the key."

Miss Tretheway handed him the key at once and it was he who locked the door. As they descended he asked:

"Where is Mrs. Tretheway? I should like to see her, if it is at all possible."

"I put her to bed," the girl replied, "and told her not to rise. I would much rather you waited till this

afternoon. She is very upset, though in your presence she seemed so calm."

The superintendent nodded.

"All right!" he said. "There's no hurry."

They did not go back to Mr. Tretheway's room, but went down to the hall. As they approached the front door they saw Maunders the coastguard talking to Duncan.

"Hello!" Liddell exclaimed. "What is it?"

"The fur coat, sir," Maunders replied. "It's Mr. Tretheway's all right, though this young gent says it isn't."

The girl ran forward and caught hold of the sodden coat.

"That is not father's coat!" she exclaimed. "It is not a bit like it."

"That's what I said," Duncan confirmed. "I know his coat. It's a brown one lined with fox."

The coat held by the coastguard was black, and lined with a rich sable, though worn slightly in the places where it had had close contact with the wearer's body.

Liddell said nothing, being fully occupied studying the faces of each of the young people in turn.

"Then," the coastguard objected "beggin' your pardons, miss, and young sir, but how about this?"

He held up a silver card case of Burmese workmanship. The police superintendent took it and opened it. Inside were half a dozen wet cards stuck together. He emptied these out carefully on to the palm of one hand. The top card bore the name: "Mr. Amos Tretheway," and in the lower corner: "The Mouls House, Polreath, Cornwall."

"These are certainly Mr. Tretheway's cards," he declared. The missing man's daughter looked puzzled and shook her head vigorously.

"I've never seen him with that card case," she said.

"What is your mother's Christian name, Miss Tretheway?" Liddell asked with apparent irrelevance.

" Esther," was the girl's astonished reply. " But why ? "

" Look at this," the superintendent directed, holding the open card case towards her.

She looked and read, engraved on the soft silver :

" From Esther to Amos, 1892."

" Mother must have given it to him when they were married," she said. " But I have never seen it before."

The superintendent turned to the coastguard.

" Where did you find the card case ? " he asked.

" In one of the pockets, sir. That is to say, it fell out as I was straightening out the coat."

" Anything else in the pockets ? "

" Only a hankercher, sir, with the letters ' A.T.' on it."

" Well ! that's that ! " was Liddell's rather inadequate remark. " Give me the coat."

He had just put the heavy wet garment across his arm when a voice behind made him turn round.

" What have you found ? " he heard.

Mrs. Tretheway had disobeyed her daughter's injunction and had risen from her bed.

Liddell explained. At the mention of the coat Mrs. Tretheway came nearer.

" Is that the coat ? " she asked, and then saw the card case in the superintendent's hand.

" Where did you find that ? " she gasped.

" In the coat pocket," Liddell replied.

" My God ! Show me the coat ! "

The coat was held out in front of her, the sable lining in evidence. For a moment she stared at it, then swayed. The police-officer had just time to drop the coat and catch her as she fell.

" Mother ! Mother ! " her daughter cried, running forward. " What is it ? "

The coastguard, with trained promptness, was already holding a flask to the lady's lips. The faint was of short duration. In less than a minute she opened her eyes which then fell on the coat lying at

her feet. She made an effort and stood erect. Liddell felt her muscles tighten and released her. There was a moment's silence

"Is that your husband's coat?" the superintendent asked.

Instead of replying, Mrs. Tretheway burst into a violent fit of sobbing. Her daughter, with a decisive movement, led her indoors.

"Now, I wonder," Liddell murmured to nobody in particular, "if it isn't young Aylward's coat."

"Good Lord, no!" Duncan replied. "He never possessed such a thing."

CHAPTER VIII

ONE OF THE BIG FIVE

AT "Ocean View" Duncan shared a table at meals with a particularly vivacious girl who was holidaying "on her own," while the superintendent's *vis-à-vis* was an elderly gentleman of loquacious bent, but at lunch that day neither Liddell nor the young man was interesting company. In vain did their respective companions introduce subjects of conversation or question them on their movements of the night before. At the other small tables curiosity was quite frank, and audible comments were made from one to the other. Miss Tansey had already communicated certain suspicions, but they were nebulous and insufficiently documented, and the preoccupied silence of the two participants in the night scene only served to increase the desire for knowledge. Towards the end of the meal the climax was reached when the spare form of the proprietress was seen agitatedly approaching the superintendent's table, and a dead silence reigned while Miss Tansey in a loud whisper into which she managed to introduce a tone of supercilious injury, announced that "Inspector Straker from Wadebridge was waiting outside with two policemen."

"All right!" Liddell replied calmly. "Tell him I'll see him when I've finished lunch."

The superintendent's *vis-à-vis* could contain himself no longer, and he voiced the general curiosity by asking loudly:

"What on earth has happened, sir, in this quiet place to bring so many police down?"

"I haven't the faintest idea, sir," Liddell replied imperturbably.

" And that's a fact, anyway," he added to himself.

Everybody in the room felt snubbed, and the silence was—if possible—deeper than before. The indignation was, however, voiced only when the superintendent, after folding his napkin with meticulous care and placing it in the embroidered napkin-case provided by the establishment, made a sign to Duncan to follow him, and left the dining-room. The young man, embarrassed by the comments made haste to leave the table where the " bachelor girl " was openly showing her displeasure at his silence.

Outside he found Liddell already putting the inspector in possession of the facts, while two constables, standing a few feet away listened open-mouthed.

" By Glory ! " the inspector—a stout, cheerful individual—exclaimed at the end. " It's a funny business altogether, no matter how you look at it."

" Yes," Liddell replied laconically.

" Is it murder or is it not ? " Inspector Straker went on. " If it is, we have to find the body before we find the murderer. If it isn't, what is it ? "

" That's what we've got to find out," the superintendent replied. " Independently of what I saw, we only know that Mr. Amos Tretheway has disappeared from his home. His car and a fur coat with his card case are all we have found. Also we know that his nephew has disappeared. By the way, did you make inquiries about him ? "

" Yes," the inspector answered. " He does not seem to have passed the night anywhere in Wadebridge or Bodmin. Nobody appears to have come across him. He took in no petrol at any of the Wadebridge garages, though two or three of them which supply night travellers were on his route—that is, if he went in that direction."

" H'm ! " Liddell grunted, and after a moment's reflection asked : " Which route would he follow from here, do you think ? "

"If he were going to Bodmin, the shortest way would be through St. Minfred to Wadebridge, and then without going into the town, along the Egloshayle Road to Bodmin, but he may not have gone near either Wadebridge or Bodmin. He could have gone from here through Endellion to Camelford—you know, the Tintagel Road, as they call it here—and so on into North Devon. And that reminds me—the constable at St. Minfred should have met him if, as you say, the young man left about midnight or sometime afterwards. He was due to patrol the road from St. Minfred to Rock *via* Polreath."

"In that case," Duncan interposed, "he might equally well have seen Mr. Tretheway's car later on the Rock road."

"True, sir, true!" the inspector agreed. "We shall have to ask him about that."

"He should have told me when I spoke to him this morning if he saw anything of the kind," Liddell growled. "But the man looks a fool."

"He's not very bright," Straker admitted, "but the question now is: what are we going to do?"

"The first thing," the superintendent directed, "is that you get on the 'phone to all your own people and to the police of the surrounding districts and set them to make inquiries as to whether Aylward has been seen. When he is found he is to be detained, but not charged until a report has been made through you to me. Then, I think you'd better have all fishermen at Padstow and Port Isaac keep a look-out for Tretheway's body——"

"No fishermen out to-day,' the inspector interrupted. "It's Saturday. None to-morrow either."

"That's a pity. However, it can't be helped. Then you'd better go over to the cliff at Trebetherick and superintend the raising of that car. These two men of yours can lend a hand. Also question the St. Minfred constable. If he has anything to say send him over here to me. That's about all we can do

unless you get on to your sergeant at Padstow and have him keep a look-out on the river. The tide may bring up something. You never know. Anyhow, we mustn't let these London detectives think that we are doing nothing."

"What!" Inspector Straker exclaimed. "Is that the lay o' the land? The Scotland Yard people are on to this! Holy Smoke!"

"That's what the Chief Constable suggested," Liddell explained.

"I see," the inspector commented. "That must be because there's one of the big London men up to Launceston on that counterfeiting case. I heard this morning that he cleared it up in grand style. He'll be looking down his nose at us country bumpkins."

"Well," the superintendent replied, "if he's able to suggest anything I haven't thought of, he's welcome."

"There's one thing you haven't thought of," said Duncan; "You haven't questioned the servants."

"Haven't I, now?" Liddell smiled. "Don't be too sure of that."

"Sorry," Duncan apologised, and as the inspector and his men moved off asked, "Can't I do anything to help in any way?"

"Yes," Liddell replied. "If you'll come up to my room."

When they were seated the superintendent filled a pipe with slow deliberation and passed a tin of cigarettes to the younger man. There was already a cloud of smoke above his head before he spoke.

"Yes," he said, then, "You may be able to help in the first place by answering a few questions about your friends across the bay."

Duncan merely nodded.

"Tell me," Liddell began, "do you know if the relations between Miss Tretheway and young Aylward were anything more than cousinly?"

The young man reddened suddenly and blurted out hotly:

"What do you mean? If you——"

Liddell held up his hand.

"Hold on!" he said. "Don't get into such a wax. I am only asking you if there is anything in the way of an understanding or engagement, official or otherwise, between them."

Duncan fidgeted in his chair.

"No," he replied. "Charlie Aylward is keen on a girl who lives near Wadebridge. There's nothing of the kind with regard to Miss Tretheway. And she——"

"Yes?" Liddell prompted as Duncan paused. "And she?"

Duncan looked thoroughly uncomfortable, and reddened more violently.

"I say," he said. "Look here, superintendent, but——"

"Nuff said," the older man smiled. "I can see as far through a stone wall as anybody. How long did you say you knew Mrs. Tretheway and her daughter?"

"I didn't say," the young man replied. "But as a matter of fact, Mrs. Tretheway was at school with my own mother and I have known Kitty since she was a baby."

"And Aylward?"

"We have always known each other."

Liddell puffed hard at his pipe for a moment.

"Have you any idea," he asked, "why Mrs. Tretheway is so unhappy?"

"Why?" Duncan burst forth boyishly. "Because Tretheway is a bounder and she is a gentle and refined lady."

"But, surely," Liddell objected, "that is no new matter. They have been married now for thirty odd years and according to their daughter, at least, there has been no particular unpleasantness until comparatively recently."

"Then I don t know," Duncan replied. "I haven't

lived in their house recently, but it's my opinion that Mrs. Tretheway was never happy with him."

"H'm! Perhaps not, perhaps not!" the police officer repeated. "It's extremely likely."

He was again silent.

"By the way," he asked suddenly, "what did you make of that business with the fur coat and the card case?"

"I'm hanged if I can make anything of it," Duncan replied. "I don't know why Mrs. Tretheway fainted. All I know is that I have never seen Tretheway wear that coat. In fact, I'm ready to bet that you'll find his coat in the house."

"It's very curious," Liddell murmured, and rose to pace the floor. "I wish I knew what really did happen last night over there in that house. I know I wasn't dreaming. I wonder if Mrs. Tretheway was telling me the truth about the hour of her nephew's departure."

"I don't believe," Duncan declared, "that Mrs. Tretheway would tell a deliberate lie to save her life."

"Perhaps not, perhaps not," the superintendent murmured. "But she has a wonderful reserve of passive resistance to the truth For she is hiding something, young fellow, she's hiding something. If we knew what, we'd probably know what has happened to her husband—yes, and to her nephew."

The young fellow made no reply. In his heart he was very little concerned as to the fate of Amos Tretheway, whom he did not like, but he was truly anxious that nothing should happen to mar the happiness of the two women whom he respected and loved—the one almost as a son, and the other—well, not as a brother. He was lost in thoughts which were rudely disturbed by a knock at the door, followed by Liddell's gruff: "Come in!" Looking up, he saw the ever inquisitive Miss Tansey, who regardless of the fact that her establishment was admirably run by a staff of competent servants advanced, holding a letter

on a salver. The superintendent picked it up and looked at it curiously

"Thank you!" he said.

Miss Tansey waited and finally spoke.

"Is there any reply, Mr. Liddell?" she asked. "The maid from Mr. Tretheway's is waiting."

"No reply," Liddell barked, without opening the letter. and Miss Tansey retreated with some precipitation. When the door had closed behind her, the superintendent laughed.

"Didn't want to open it in her presence," he explained, "just out of pure cussedness. Now let's see!"

He tore open the envelope.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "He's been quick."

"What's that?" Duncan asked.

For answer Liddell handed over the enclosure—a visiting card. The young man read the pencilled note: "Can you come over? I have just arrived."

Turning the card over he started in surprise.

"Chief Detective-Inspector Gilmartin!" he exclaimed. "One of the Big Five! I'd like to meet him."

"You shall!" Liddell promised and reached for his hat. "Come on!"

CHAPTER IX

FACTS AND FANCIES

AS they came up the gravel path towards the front door of the house on the cliff they saw Miss Tretheway walking up and down side by side with a man in a grey suit of Donegal tweed, who was so tall and so large that though of more than medium height herself she appeared almost diminutive beside him. Curly, black hair, surmounted a head and features every one of which betrayed their Celtic origin. The luxuriant moustache reminded one of the illustrations of Ouida's guardsmen. As he walked he leaned a little to one side, nodding now and then as he listened to what his companion was saying. Behind his back he held with both hands a thin, blue-bound book and the brim of a soft "trilby" hat. Miss Tretheway was talking rapidly and—if her expression spoke truly—earnestly.

The crunch of Liddell's and Duncan's footsteps on the gravel attracted the tall man's attention and he looked up

"Ah!" he said with a slight brogue. "This is probably Superintendent Liddell."

"Yes," Miss Tretheway answered. "And Mr. Duncan, a friend of ours."

"Chief Detective-Inspector Gilmartin, I presume," Liddell said, advancing.

"Yes," the other replied. "Who would seem to be in a fair way of becoming a fixture with the Cornwall County Police. Your Chief Constable is a very determined man, sir. I had already made preparations to leave for London to-night, but he fixed things up

with the Yard so that I should give you a hand with this affair here for a few days."

"Glad to have you," Liddell said, holding out his hand, "for I must admit I'm at a loss."

"Oh!" Gilmartin exclaimed, shaking hands heartily. "No wonder! Miss Tretheway has been telling me what she knows and things certainly seem involved. But you have such talent in the County Police that I really feel that I am intruding."

Whatever jealousy Liddell may have felt was speedily allayed by this speech.

"How did you get here so quickly?" he asked.

"In the Chief Constable's car," Gilmartin replied briefly.

Miss Tretheway, conscious that the two police-officers were anxious to discuss matters, excused herself on the plea that her mother required her and left them. Gilmartin spoke a few words to Jimmy on indifferent matters and then turned to Liddell.

"The young lady," he said, "has been telling me what has happened, but I should like to hear it all over again from you if you don't mind. Let us go over there to that garden seat. Come on, Mr. Duncan, you too."

When they had seated themselves Gilmartin proceeded to fill his pipe and listened in silence while Liddell recounted his experiences of the night before and that morning. When he had finished the Irish-man still sat silent, looking at the ground in front of him for some minutes. His two companions eyed him anxiously.

"H'm!" he said at last. "It was really unfortunate that the tide was high."

"Very," Liddell agreed. "I might have been able to prevent the disappearance of the old man, if nothing else."

Gilmartin looked out over the beach towards New Polreath.

"Perhaps," he said doubtfully. "It's a long way

across even in a straight line. But I wasn't thinking of that. By the way, as you came across, did either of you see or hear any signs of a car ? "

" No ! " the superintendent replied. " But, unless it came down from the direction of Rock going towards the Wadebridge road, a car even with headlights would not be visible. As for hearing it, the noise of the wind and sea would prevent that."

The detective drew from his pocket a motorist's road map.

" Now, let us see ! " he said. " This is the south side of the bay. One road runs from this end of the beach and joins up about half a mile away with a road from the north side, then leaving St. Minfred—that's the place with the church spire, isn't it ?—on the right goes on to Wadebridge. Before that, however, there's a road to the right, leading from here into St. Minfred itself, and from there to the Wadebridge road further on. Now which of these would a motorist take if he were going to Wadebridge ? "

" Oh, the one that leaves St. Minfred on the right," Duncan replied, as Liddell shook his head in ignorance. " The other one is too narrow and winding for comfort, especially on dark and stormy nights like last night."

" I see," Gilmartin nodded. " That's the one my chauffeur took—the first one, I mean. Rather exposed in parts, but wide enough as Cornish roads go."

" Yes," Duncan agreed. " But from this side of the bay a car would go by the Rock road to Wadebridge, that is as a general rule, unless he didn't mind this bad piece behind the beach and through that stream."

" I see," the detective commented, running his finger along the map. " Then let us look at this side. The road running south goes on past a coastguard station. After that, before the cross-roads, a road goes to the right and stops on the edge of the sea shore. Is that where the car and the coat were found ? "

Liddell nodded.

"Then, let's see!" Gilmartin went on. "There's Trebetherick. After that golf links on the left, Rock beyond the golf links, and what's this? St. Enodoc's church on the links! The road itself runs right down to the water's edge—the mouth of the River Camel. Is there a bridge across to Padstow anywhere?"

"No," Duncan replied. "There is only a ferry boat. If you want to motor to Padstow you have to go to Wadebridge and round—a matter of about sixteen miles, yet as the crow flies from here to Padstow is not more than about three at the outside.

"By the way," the detective asked, "how is it that all these place names are so familiar to me? I seem to know them all."

Duncan laughed.

"You've probably read Baring-Gould. Cruel Coppinger and his merry men used to operate in this district.

"I see. Very interesting," Gilmartin commented shortly, folding his map. "But to return to our muttons, it seems clear to me that if we are to look for Aylward we must do so first of all in this part of the country north of the Camel. There is no doubt of that. So, Superintendent, I should think that some of your men should be detailed to inquire at every farmhouse, inn, and garage in the sector bounded by the sea, the River Camel and a line running through Wadebridge, and Camelford to the North Devon border. It is curious if nobody in that region has seen or heard a car passing. There cannot have been many out last night."

"It was very late, you know," Liddell warned. "And the night was stormy."

"I know, I know," Gilmartin agreed. "It's a gamble, a chance shot, but it's the only thing to do. And another thing, Mr. Duncan! Do you know of any place in London or elsewhere where Aylward is likely to go?"

"No," Duncan replied. "Unless he went to

Cambridge or—there's a man in London he knows very well. He might let him know where he is."

"Do you know his address?"

"Yes, I'll let you have it; I wouldn't if I thought Charlie was guilty of what you all suspect."

The detective made no comment beyond a nod.

"Just another question," he said. "Did either of you see anything at all on your way over here or back?"

"Absolutely nothing," Liddell replied.

Gilmartin looked at Duncan, who shook his head, and then stopped as if struck by a sudden thought.

"But, I say, Superintendent," he said to Liddell, "didn't we see a sailing vessel of some kind as we were on the way back to 'Ocean View'?"

"Yes, now that you mention it," Liddell replied, "we did. It was going northward toward Pentire Head."

"Far out?" the detective asked.

"No, it seemed to be coming out of the estuary, judging by its course."

"That's interesting," Gilmartin commented. "A sailing vessel out on such a stormy night!"

"Oh, the wind had abated a good deal then," the superintendent corrected. "In fact, it was no longer even raining. I don't think there's anything in it."

"I don't know," Duncan demurred. "When you consider it, that boat must have been quite close inshore when the car went over the cliff."

"That depends," Gilmartin declared, "on when the car actually did go over. Remember that strictly speaking we have no evidence as to when that two-seater left the garage. Yet, we certainly must consider the possibility of the sea as a means of getting away from here, and that sailing vessel may or may not be connected with it."

"There is also no evidence," Duncan put in, "that Mr. Tretheway was ever in the car at all."

"That's so!" the superintendent admitted glumly.

"Anyhow,"—Gilmartin stood up and stretched himself—"as I see it, this is the state of affairs: a man with a pointed beard attacked Tretheway in his bedroom. Tretheway or his body then disappears from that bedroom inside half-an-hour or less. His nephew, who happens to have a pointed beard, disappears on the same night after a quarrel with the older man. Tretheway's car is found at the foot of a cliff a short distance from his house. These are the known facts. They are not many. Now what are the things we do not know? First and most important of all, the whereabouts of Tretheway and Aylward. Then, the cause of the quarrel between them, the ownership of the fur coat, how the car went over the cliff, though the evidence points to the fact that it was pushed over. How are we to explain the presence of that card case? Why did Mrs. Tretheway faint when she saw it? Oh, we could go on for ever enumerating the things that we don't know."

"There certainly is a terrible lot of them," Liddell replied despairingly.

"Still," Gilmartin encouraged him. "We do know one or two things, and we shall find out others, fit them all together and with a bit of luck we'll know all we want to know."

"It's my opinion," Duncan ventured timidly, "that if you find out the cause of the quarrel or quarrels, you will discover the truth about the rest."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you're right there," Gilmartin agreed, and looking at the superintendent, "What are we going to do when we find Aylward—if we find him?"

"Personally," the superintendent replied, "I should arrest him."

"On what charge?"

"Murder."

"Murder? But, man alive, you don't even know that anybody has been killed. Where's the body?"

"True," Liddell then agreed. "In fact our job is

simply to find two missing men, Mr. Amos Tretheway and Mr. Charles Aylward."

"Quite so," Gilmartin confirmed. "That is, indeed, the job before us. If they are alive and in England—or in Cornwall, which I believe is a different country—we'll find them. If Tretheway is dead, that's another pair of shoes. Murdered? We've got to prove it by finding the body, and then buckle to and find the murderer. Oh, it's a fine old muddle."

"Yes, indeed," Liddell grumbled. "It's a muddle that'll make me the laughing stock of the country."

"Why?" Gilmartin asked.

"Good Heavens, man," the superintendent exclaimed, "can't you see the headlines already? 'Police Superintendent Witnesses Murder! Murderer and Victim Missing!' Oh! Lord!"

The detective could not help laughing. The despair of the superintendent appealed to his sense of humour as did also the situation he had conjured up.

"Who knows," he asked, "that you saw the attack on Tretheway?"

"Only Duncan here, and the two ladies," was the reply, "but everybody over at 'Ocean View' knows that I came running over here in the middle of the night."

"Oh, then, don't worry," the detective-inspector advised. "We'll concoct a story for the press lads. Lucky we thought of it. They are bound to come down here as soon as they hear of the police invasion, and we may as well make friends of them. In these cases of disappearance they are often useful. They will be made to think your part in the affair quite natural. You were called in as you happened to be on a holiday in Polreath. In any case, nothing can appear now until Monday."

Liddell brightened up. He was beginning to like this big Irishman from Scotland Yard.

"And now?" he said, "what are you going to do?"

"Personally," Gilmartin replied, "I'm going to look

for a place to eat and sleep for a couple of days. I suppose that is possible to find."

"Yes," Duncan volunteered. "There's 'Ocean View' where Superintendent Liddell and I are staying."

"Good!" the detective approved. "Then I shall go there, but if you don't mind, I'll not announce the fact that I am a policeman."

Duncan laughed.

"The proprietress, Miss Tansey," he said, "will do her best to find out your antecedents, don't worry."

"I'll deal with her," Gilmartin promised. "I know the type. You two had better not know me. You can probably scrape acquaintance with me there."

Both nodded.

"Would you like to have a look round first?" Liddell proposed. "To see the car or something like that? They must have raised it by now."

"Well, yes," Gilmartin consented. "Perhaps it might be as well in any case to see those footprints before they disappear. I might learn something from them that your casts would not tell me. By the way, how do you account for two sets of footprints?"

Liddell shook his head.

"Have you a theory, Mr. Duncan?" the detective smiled. "I don't usually form them myself—consciously, that is—but I like to listen to them sometimes."

Duncan hesitated.

"N-no," he replied, "but I am convinced that Charlie Aylward never did away with the old man."

"You forget what I saw," Liddell remonstrated.

"There are two answers to that," Duncan insisted. "In the first place, as Mr. Gilmartin would say, there is no evidence that the man you saw was Aylward. You have never seen him, and all you know about the man you saw from your window is that he had a beard—a pointed beard. There are hundreds of pointed beards in the world."

"Quite so!" Gilmartin nodded approvingly.

" With all due respect to the superintendent, you have put his evidence exactly in its proper place."

Liddell nodded in agreement.

" Absolutely," he said. " And what is the second point you mentioned."

" The second point," Duncan answered, " is that whether the man you saw was Aylward or not you cannot say definitely what injury—if any—he inflicted on Mr. Tretheway. At that distance, even with glasses, you couldn't see clearly enough for that."

" Oh, I saw clearly enough," Liddell replied. " They are good glasses."

" They may be," Duncan retorted. " But I am not convinced that looking through them as you did—intermittently—you saw every detail of what happened. For example, you say that you saw Tretheway being throttled. How do you know that the attacker's fingers were on his windpipe and not simply on his shoulders close up to the neck, and that he was not only pushing him back on the bed ? "

Liddell was silent. Gilmartin looked at him questioningly.

" I suppose you're right," the superintendent admitted after a moment. " The points you make are good ones."

" They are," the detective emphasised. " Very good ones. Mr. Duncan ought to go in for the Criminal Bar."

" I was thinking of it," the youth replied modestly.

" Well," said Gilmartin rising, " all this is very interesting, but I think it might be more profitable to go and see what Inspector Straker is doing about that car."

CHAPTER X

NEGLECT OF DUTY

WHEN they reached the cliff which Liddell had visited that morning, they found it surmounted by a workmanlike contrivance something like a derrick and capstan combined. Inspector Straker and his men were even then untying from a dripping car the ropes which encircled it, and by which it had been hauled up. A coastguard was holding several articles which had evidently been salved from the sea at the same time. Gilmartin began immediately to inspect these objects. They were a rug, a thermos flask which the detective unscrewed and found to contain neat brandy, a large service revolver loaded in all chambers, a striped silk scarf and a muffler of rough wool. A pocket-book containing several sodden and inkstained papers completed the list. This the detective wrapped in his handkerchief and put in his pocket for future, more detailed, inspection. He then turned to the car and began at once to examine the interior. Inspector Straker and his constables watched him curiously as they resumed their tunics and headgear. Liddell and Duncan were also following his movements with close attention, whilst the coastguards assembled their gear with the superior aloofness of specialists who had done their own job satisfactorily and cared about naught else.

The Irishman heeded none of them. Methodically he went through every part of the car beginning with a close examination of the clutch. A grunt followed his observations there, and he turned to the door

pockets. That on the right, by the driving seat contained only Tretheway's licence and a few Automobile Club vouchers. The left pocket at first glance appeared to be empty, but by searching in the corners, Gilmartin found a piece of torn envelope almost reduced to pulp and an irregular piece of paper about two inches square upon which were a few blurred words in copying ink pencil. On the principle called by him "you never know" he put these carefully away between the leaves of the little blue-bound book he was carrying. The hood, folded and strapped though it was, was the next object of his attention, but nothing was between its folds. At the back was a dickey which the detective forced open with some difficulty. Here he was rewarded by the sight of a woman's scarf of some oriental tissue scarcely moist, for the water had not easily penetrated so far.

His examination at an end, Gilmartin approached Liddell who was standing with the Inspector in uniform and asked him to show the footprints. These he examined only perfunctorily.

"That's all for the present," he announced. "I daresay arrangements can be made to have the car towed to a safe place."

"Yes." Liddell replied. "Inspector Straker will see to that."

Straker, who had been looking at the Scotland Yard man with something of awe in his expression, bustled over to his men to give the necessary orders.

"I would only suggest," the detective continued, "that the towing be done in such a way that the coachwork be fingered as little as possible and that the man at the steering wheel should wear gloves and touch it as lightly as possible. We may get nothing in the way of finger prints but you never know."

"We took good care, sir," one of the coastguards said, "to rub her as little as possible when tyin' her up. I don't know what these bobbies have done when untyin' her."

Gilmartin smiled and turned to Liddell.

"I should like to see the constable who was on night duty last night," he said.

"Humph!" the superintendent grunted, "Straker has something to tell you about that."

He called his subordinate over and introduced him to the detective.

"Tell him what you told me about that constable of yours," he ordered.

"It's only this," Straker said to Gilmartin, "that through neglect of duty on his part we are deprived of information about the movements of cars on these roads last night."

Constable Treleaven, standing with the other policemen, looked thoroughly uncomfortable as his superior's voice was not lowered, and the coastguards were now listening with undisguised curiosity not unmingled with glee. Obviously the St. Minfred constable was not popular with them. Seeing this the watchful Gilmartin suggested that they move up the road a little. When they were out of hearing Straker continued:

"Yes, I questioned him and he has admitted that instead of being on patrol duty last night he was in bed. Said he was ill, but when I pressed him he admitted that he had had a drink last evening at the Rock hotel. When he got home to St. Minfred he felt drowsy and fell asleep. Swears he only had a pint of bitter but that's all rot."

"It's certainly curious," Gilmartin commented, "Let's have him over here."

A very sheepish young constable came up at Straker's call and saluted.

"What's this I hear about you?" Liddell asked severely.

Treleaven made no reply and Gilmartin intervened.

"Just tell us," he said gently, "about that drink you had yesterday."

"It was only one, sir," the constable began. "I

went into Rock on my push-bike to order some coal from Bray and Parkins and called in at the hotel bar and ordered a pint of bitter."

"Were you in uniform?" the detective asked.

"No, sir."

"I see. Well go on! Was there anybody else in the bar besides you?"

"There were two strangers, sir. Well dressed gentlemen they were. They got into talk with me."

"What did you talk about?"

"One thing and another, sir," the constable replied. "The crops and so on."

"Did you tell them you were a policeman?"

"No, sir, but the girl behind the bar said something about it."

"I see. And when you drank your beer?"

"I went home, sir."

"And you felt all right until you got home?"

"Yes, sir—that is, I remember wondering why I felt so tired and when I got home I lay down on the bed and fell asleep at once. The wife says she tried to wake me up when it was time to go out but couldn't. When I woke up this morning it was nearly nine o'clock and my head felt very bad, but it got a bit better when I had a cup of tea."

"H-r-r-r-umph!" Inspector Straker grunted indignantly.

"H'm!" Gilmartin pondered in silence for a minute.

"Now think well, young fellow," he said finally. "After the barmaid gave you your drink did you keep your glass or tankard or whatever it was in sight until you finished it, or was your attention distracted from it in any way?"

The constable's face showed the dawning of comprehension.

"Now you mention it, sir," he said, "one of the men in the bar called me out to the door and asked me if I knew who a gentleman was who was passing in a car. I left my glass down and went to have a look

at him, but I didn't know him. That was after I had begun my glass."

"Now another thing! Did you mention to the barmaid or to anybody else in the hearing of those two men that you were going to be on night patrol last night?"

"Yes, sir, I'm afraid I did. I made a remark to the girl that it looked like being a bad night for night duty, and then I told her in a joking sort of way that she needn't be afraid of burglars, as I was passing that way coming from St. Minfred by way of Polreath."

Gilmartin nodded to Straker who had been snorting in indignation as he heard the constable's replies.

"That'll do!" the inspector snapped at Treleaven, "and when you get home read the regulation about letting evil disposed persons know the system of working your beat!"

The constable, red-eared, withdrew to the other group.

"I think," Gilmartin said, "you'll have to content yourself with giving him a good wigging for talking too much. He has told us the truth, I believe, and it is fairly evident that he was got at. His drink was undoubtedly tampered with."

"It looks like it," Liddell agreed.

"I suggest," the detective went on, "that you make him sit down up there in the coastguard station and write you out a report on his visit to the hotel bar, giving as accurate a description of the two men as he possibly can. At the same time let somebody question that barmaid and compare the stories. Also get descriptions from her. I'll wager they're better ones than that boy will give. After that, ignore his lapse for the present and lend him to me. I see he has a motor-bike. I'll be able to make use of him and possibly shake him up a bit. After all, he's married. Give him a chance."

Straker, who at heart was a kindly soul, nodded.

"All right! I'll do exactly as you say." he said.

"Then I must finish this job. It'll be dark in half-an-hour."

Liddell, Duncan and Gilmartin then collected the objects salved from the sea, with the exception of the rug, but not before the detective, on a sudden impulse, had poured out a generous helping of the brandy to the coastguards who had been working in their wet clothes.

CHAPTER XI

WALKS AND TALKS

CHIEF Detective-Inspector Laurence Gilmartin had not always been a policeman. Before donning the blue of the London Constable he had worn the black cassock of a theological student at Maynooth and then the shabby serge of the Fleet Street free lance. A modest and indeed, a retiring man, he preferred to be considered a detective first and last. His chiefs, however, knew that a soft heart lay beneath the sometimes exaggerated hardness, and that, above all, he was a cultured and educated man. His colleagues sometimes smiled when they saw him absorbed in some little blue-bound book written in characters which were Greek to them, and in all probability were Greek indeed, for he had a weakness for the later Hellenic authors. He used to say that Lucian's *Vera Historia* was better reading than Jules Verne and H. G. Wells's earlier works rolled into one. Popular among subordinates, though he had the reputation of being a slave driver ; among criminals of the professional type though he was ruthless in running them to earth ; among women, though he professed a wholesome fear of the sex, he was invariably sent to unravel mysteries where the rougher and more clumsy methods of more talented colleagues might have rendered nugatory all their efforts. Yet he could be hard on occasion and his rudeness to people who attempted to "diddle" him or to patronise him was proverbial at the Yard. It was said that he had on one occasion knocked down a prominent young parliamentry

secretary who when found by the detective in somewhat discreditable surroundings tried to " throw his weight about."

It was characteristic of the man that within five minutes of meeting Miss Tansey he had charmed that lady by his manner towards her, for he listened to her patiently for fifteen minutes while she retailed a string of gossip which would have driven Superintendent Liddell out of the house in as many seconds. The result was that the best room available in " Ocean View " was put at his disposal for as long as he wished to stay, " though old clients had already booked it," but " they would have to be content with another, that's all." When the fussy little proprietress left him, Gilmartin stood with a smile on his face looking out over the Atlantic, absent-mindedly filling a pipe. The arrival of a boy from the other side of the bay with his suitcase did not interrupt his train of thought, but at the sound of the dinner gong he turned away and exclaimed :

" I wonder ! "

That was all.

When he reached the dining-room door, Miss Tansey waylaid him and drew him to one side.

" Do you mind," she asked, " if I put you at the same table as a police-superintendent ? The only free table has been taken by the gentleman who until to-day has been sitting opposite him. It will only be for the week-end."

Gilmartin could have burst out laughing, but he replied quite seriously :

" I don't mind a bit, Miss Tansey. Anywhere you like."

The lady moved confidentially towards him and whispered :

" You might hear something interesting from him. I believe he is down here on some mysterious business."

" Really ! " Gilmartin replied in the same con-

spiratorial tone. "That's interesting. I'll pump him and let you know if I find out anything."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Gilmartin!" Miss Tansey gushed, but suddenly remembering her dignity and with it her duties, continued: "It is the small table over there near the window."

Liddell gave a very creditable imitation of a complete stranger when the detective bowed seriously and sat down opposite him. For the benefit of the waitress Gilmartin opened up conversation in the usual Anglo-Saxon way—by comments on the weather. As a matter of fact he had no desire to discuss the Tretheway case just then and the two men talked of other matters.

After the meal Gilmartin withdrew almost at once to his room, where he wrote far into the night. Had the superintendent seen the result he might have been surprised. Far from being notes on the case which he was then investigating, it was a long newsy epistle to his wife of only a few months who was obliged to revert to a bachelor existence whilst her husband came and went in erratic fashion. In the letter, however, Gilmartin gave an outline of the story of the double disappearance of Tretheway and his nephew, knowing his north-country wife to be not only discreet, but of good counsel.

On the following morning he was up before anyone was astir and having consulted a guide-book which he found downstairs he trudged off across the sand dunes to Rock and thence by ferry to Padstow, where before continuing on his way to early Mass he entered into conversation with the ferryman and some of his cronies who were sitting about on benches along the quay.

On his return he found Duncan alone in the dining-room and proposed that they should explore the cliffs towards the North. They set forth and Gilmartin spoke no word of the Mouls House mystery as they walked. Instead, he seemed lost in admiration of the

cliff scenery. Pentire Headland, the rugged castellated outline of Rumps Point, the softer beauty of Lundy Cove, the distant wall-like cliffs around Tintagel, the varied colouring all around excited his enthusiasm. The tiny hamlet of Portquin, hidden away in a cliff-bound valley, whose deserted appearance, tumble-down houses and ruined curing cellars told the sad story of the sea's ruthlessness, when one night of its cruel work made of the village a community of fishermen's widows and orphans. Gilmartin's Celtic soul was touched by the story which Duncan told him of that awful night years before, and he was silent as they breasted the hill on the other side of which lay the quaint old fishing port of Port Isaac.

There, in the " Plat " when the younger man would have led him through the picturesque streets of the village, the detective entered into conversation with a few loungers whose bell-bottomed trousers and general appearance proclaimed them to be fishermen enjoying the Sabbath rest. Duncan as he listened was astonished at his companion's encyclopædic knowledge for he talked of fishing, of boats, of rigging, as if his life had been spent on the sea. The fishermen, not always so loquacious with " foreigners " talked willingly with him. After a quarter of an hour of this Gilmartin announced his intention of returning to Polreath.

" And," he added. " We'll have to step out briskly if we are to have any lunch."

The return journey was by road, and by the time they reached the hill above Polreath within sight of the " Paying Guest Establishment " they were ravenous. They slowed down, however, as they overtook Liddell who was strolling along lazily.

" Been doing anything ? " the superintendent asked.

" Yes," Gilmartin answered. " We've had a walk as far as Port Isaac."

" I don't mean that," Liddell began." I mean——"

" I see," the detective laughed. " You mean that I should not have any Sunday relaxation. Well, as a

matter of fact, I *have* done a little work to-day, whether useful or not I don't know yet."

"What was that?" the superintendent asked.

"I've just told you," Gilmartin replied with a twinkle in his eye. "I've taken a walk as far as Port Isaac. Before that I went over to Padstow."

Liddell was no fool and did not insist. Duncan wondered what the detective was hinting at, for he had seen no signs of work as he understood it since breakfast.

"Straker tells me," the superintendent said as they walked down the hill, "that no trace of Aylward's car has been encountered anywhere in the radius you mentioned. He seems to have called at no garage."

"Strange!" Gilmartin reflected. "Well, there's only one thing to be done. Circularise farther afield. A car can't go on for ever without petrol."

"I have already arranged for that," Liddell replied. "I have also requested all coastguard stations to keep a lookout for a possible duplication of the cliff stunt in the case of Aylward's car."

"Why?" the detective asked. "Have you any reason to suspect anything of the kind?"

"No. It's just a shot in the dark."

"It may be a lucky one," the detective nodded.

"And another thing," the superintendent continued, "I have Straker's report with regard to the doping of that constable's beer, based on Treleaven's own report and on an examination of the barmaid. The barmaid's story confirms the constable's. Of course neither of them saw the drink being tampered with."

"How about the descriptions of the two men?"

"Straker gives them. You were right about one thing. The girl's description is better than the policeman's."

"Have you the report with you?"

"Yes,"—Liddell drew a sheet of foolscap from his pocket—"here it is."

Gilmartin took the paper and read as he walked.

"H'm!" he muttered. "Tall, hair grey at the temples, bushy eyebrows, clean-shaven, wearing heather mixture plus fours, grey cap. That's no masterpiece in the way of description. I'd guarantee to find a dozen men like that in the vicinity of any golf-links. Now let's see the other: 'medium height, looks older than the tall man, light blue-grey eyes—whatever that may be—grey moustache, legs rather short, wore grey flannel trousers and grey sports jacket, also grey soft hat'—humph! A study in grey! Well, superintendent, I don't think much of Constable's Treleaven's powers of observation. I know all police descriptions are inadequate but these are the limit!"

"Yes," Liddell agreed. "I see I shall have to make them buck up in this part of the world. But read on. The barmaid improves on that a bit."

Gilmartin again turned his eyes to the paper.

"Ah!" he exclaimed after a moment. "This is better. 'The tall man had the lobe of the right ear missing. Spoke like an Australian.' How the dickens does she know how an Australian speaks?"

"I asked Straker that," the superintendent replied. "It appears that she herself spent three years in New Zealand so she probably heard a few there."

"I see. Now further: 'The small man's eyes were slanting almost like a Chinaman's but he was not Chinese. He was English and spoke like a Cockney. Noticed that when he was drinking he could not unbend the little finger of the right hand.' Man, that girl is a jewel!"

Liddell and Duncan saw that Gilmartin was excited. He quickened his pace and they had almost to run to keep up with him. He said nothing until they had reached the gate of "Ocean View." Then he asked:

"Can I send a wire from here?"

"Not to-day," Liddell replied. "It's Sunday."

"And a letter?"

"No, but there's a collection at Wadebridge at 3 p.m."

"Then I want that constable with his motor-cycle to be here at two-fifteen."

"I'll see to it," the superintendent promised.

During lunch when the waitress was out of hearing the detective leaned over the table towards Liddell and asked:

"Have you noticed anything curious about Polreath—as a seaside resort, I mean?"

"N-no!" Liddell replied wondering, "I can't say I have."

"First thing I noticed," Gilmartin declared, "was that there is not a single boat of any shape or form."

"By Jove, that's so!" the superintendent exclaimed. "I hadn't remarked it but it's so. I suppose it's because of the breakers."

"Probably," the Irishman agreed, and continued, "Furthermore, I observed to-day that from Padstow to Port Isaac all along the coast there are also no boats with the exception of a couple of old tubs at Portquin."

"Interesting!" Liddell commented. "But has the fact any significance from our point of view?"

"I don't know," Gilmartin replied. "But as you say, it is interesting, especially in view of the fact that you and Duncan saw a sailing boat crossing the bay from South to North on the night before last."

"Oh!" Liddell waved his hand. "That was a fairly big boat. It might have been coming out of Padstow or going to Port Isaac."

"Now that is what is very curious," the detective retorted. "It was doing neither. I have ascertained to-day—and that is the work I mentioned having done—that on the night before last, no boat of any kind—large or small—left or entered Padstow or Port Isaac."

"H'm!" the superintendent reflected. "Then Heaven knows where it was going or what it was doing!"

"And it won't be easy to find out," the detective said, "but my advice is that we try, even if we have to have inquiries made all along the coast as far as Cardiff."

CHAPTER XII

A SILK SCARF

IN after days Gilmartin used to refer to his first interview with Mrs. Tretheway on that Sunday afternoon as one of the rare occasions when he had been absolutely beaten. No mean cross-examiner, he saw all his efforts at extracting any information of value foiled at every stage by the calm, obstinate silence of this fragile, white-haired woman. He had gone over to " The Mouls House " as soon as he had dispatched the constable to Wadebridge with the letter over which he had taken some pains after lunch.

Mrs. Tretheway admitted quite frankly as she had done before that she knew the reason for the quarrel between her husband and her nephew, but she refused to discuss it. Why ? It was a family matter, and in any case had no bearing on her husband's disappearance. She was certain that the attacker of her husband who had been seen by Superintendent Liddell was not her nephew, but she did not know and could not suggest who he might be. Yes, she would give Mr. Gilmartin photographs of her husband and Charles Aylward.

Gilmartin studied the cabinet photos which she drew from an album.

" Have you any idea, Mrs. Tretheway," he asked. " where Mr. Aylward may have gone."

" He told me," she replied, " that he would pass the night at a hotel in Wadebridge or Bodmin and then go on to London. He said that he would write to me from there."

" If you receive a letter from him," Gilmartin pursued, " Will you let me know the address from which he writes."

Mrs. Tretheway hesitated.

"Yes," she said finally, "unless he asks me to keep it to myself."

"H'm!" Gilmartin muttered and was then silent.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Gilmartin," she continued, "that I am unable to help you more, but you must understand that there are matters—family matters—which I cannot discuss."

Gilmartin rose.

"Mrs. Tretheway," he said. "I understand your attitude—up to a certain point, but I must confess that beyond that point you puzzle me. Either you are anxious to know what has become of your husband or you are not. Which is it?"

He paused, but Mrs. Tretheway was silent.

"Up to the present," he continued. "It would almost appear that his disappearance is a matter of indifference to you. In fact, though you have asked Superintendent Liddell to investigate this matter, you seem deliberately to be putting obstacles in his and my way."

Gilmartin, angry himself, was trying to provoke her into making some unguarded admission, but she waited for him to go on.

"You take it upon yourself," the Irishman pursued, "to be sole judge of what information may be useful or otherwise to the police. You plead family reasons, but remember, Mrs. Tretheway, you may find these very matters which you desire to keep secret dragged out in a court of law."

Here Mrs. Tretheway winced visibly and the detective went on:

"And it may yet be that what you consider irrelevant to your husband's disappearance is a matter of public interest. I ask you again to have the kindness to confide in me. If what you tell me has no bearing on the case it will go no further."

Mrs. Tretheway shook her head.

"Very well!" Gilmartin declared. "Your silence

tells me that it *has*, in your opinion, a bearing on the case, therefore I shall make it my business to find out for myself what I want to know. I warn you, however, that your attitude, in the view of any impartial observer, can only serve to throw grave suspicion on your nephew,—and—pardon me—on yourself."

This stung her, and she exclaimed :

" How dare you ? "

Gilmartin's former suavity returned.

" I am very sorry if I appear rude," he said, " but I am an officer of the law and as such no respecter of persons."

He bowed and went towards the door. As he was about to turn the handle he turned round.

" If at any time," he urged, " you wish to tell me anything, I——"

" I can tell you nothing," Mrs. Tretheway interrupted uncompromisingly and turned away.

The detective, still holding the door-handle, paused as if undecided. Suddenly he stepped back into the room and pulled from his pocket the silk scarf which he had found in the dickey of the salvaged two-seater.

" Mrs. Tretheway," he said, holding it at arm's length. " Is this your property ? "

The lady turned round.

" No," she replied, hardly looking at the flimsy piece of silk. " Where did you find it ? "

" In your husband's two-seater."

" In my—let me see ! "—Mrs. Tretheway was obviously agitated—" Perhaps—I did not look closely at it. Yes, I—I think it is my daughter's."

" Do you mind if I retain it ? " Gilmartin asked, and without awaiting permission put the scarf back into his pocket. Then bidding her good afternoon he left the room.

At the foot of the stairs he met Kitty Tretheway who had just come back from the evening service at St Minfred parish church.

"Any news?" she asked anxiously, all pretence of indifference gone.

"Very little, I am afraid," Gilmartin replied.

"Oh, I do wish we knew something definite," the girl sighed. "It is killing mother and I don't know how to help."

"You can perhaps help me in one matter, Miss Tretheway," Gilmartin said.

"Tell me, do tell me!" the girl pleaded eagerly. "I am really only too anxious to do something."

"If you will kindly walk a few steps with me," the detective answered. "I will tell you."

Without a word the girl turned and led the way out into the open. When they had reached the front gate, Gilmartin spoke.

"I am convinced," he said, "that if we knew the reason for the quarrel between your father and your cousin we should be able to advance considerably in our investigation of their disappearance."

"That is also my idea," the girl replied, "but mother does not agree, she says that it is absurd."

"If you will pardon me saying so," Gilmartin went on, "Your mother is going out of her way to be a hindrance to us instead of a help."

"Mr. Gilmartin!" Miss Tretheway exclaimed, "Please do not think that! I know that she and father do not get on sometimes, and that she appears hard and unforgiving, but she wouldn't——"

"Let us leave that!" the detective interrupted. "The point I am anxious about is the reason for that quarrel."

"I know nothing about that," the girl replied. "Every time I came near they stopped and began to speak of other matters."

"Then these quarrels often took place? This last one was not an exceptional case?"

"No, except that it seems to have been rather more serious than the others."

"Who began the quarrels as a rule, your father or your cousin?" Gilmartin asked.

Miss Tretheway hesitated.

"You said you were anxious to help," the detective reminded.

"I know," the girl said slowly. "That is not why I do not answer at once. I am trying to think. You see, I was never really present at any quarrel, at least at the beginning. It strikes me, however, that Charlie began them."

"H'm!" Gilmartin murmured. "That, I take it, is just an impression."

Miss Tretheway nodded.

"Well, now," the detective said, stopping in order to emphasise his words. "You can possibly help me—and your mother—by trying to find out why they quarrelled. I don't want you to do anything underhand but I do wish you could persuade your mother to speak. I hate to be disagreeable to her, for she has her own troubles, but if she continues to obstruct me I shall be obliged to take strong measures, even to the extent of putting Mrs. Tretheway under arrest."

"Oh! You wouldn't——"

"Oh, yes, I would," Gilmartin assured her gravely.

The girl appeared staggered, not so much by the threat as by the implication apparently underlying it. She stared fixedly into space.

"It won't be necessary," she said at last. "I shall persuade her to be more frank with you."

"Thank you!"

"But," Miss Tretheway added solemnly. "Charlie Aylward—nor mother of course—never did anything to father, you may be sure. The reverse is far more probable—though I hate to say it."

This was a new point of view and Gilmartin stared.

"What makes you think that?" he asked.

"I cannot explain very well," the girl replied. "Charlie was quick-tempered sometimes, but knew how to restrain himself, whilst father was very violent. Besides, father though he is no longer young is much stronger than Charlie."

"H'm!" Gilmartin reflected. "That is a new point of view."

"Of course, I do not mean——" Miss Tretheway began.

"I understand. I understand," Gilmartin repeated. "You don't mean by that to accuse your father. Of course not."

He was silent for some moments, and then asked:

"Could you by any chance call to mind any words or phrases, however unimportant, used by your cousin or your father when you surprised them quarrelling? Perhaps even the tail end of a phrase as you were entering the room?"

"Yes. I remember one phrase, and I asked Charlie about it afterwards, but he would tell me nothing. It was one day last week. I walked into the library and found them quarrelling. As I opened the door, I heard father say—I don't remember the exact words, but it was something like: 'You young whippersnapper, you're up against something bigger than you think. Why, if you interfered I'd make no bones whatever of crushing you like an insect!' Then they saw me and said no more."

"Very curious! Very curious indeed!" Gilmartin murmured meditatively as he wrote in a notebook.

"Of course," the girl added, "it may mean nothing really, for father would say the most terrible things when he was angry."

"Quite! Oh, quite!" the detective confirmed hurriedly. "But I must be getting on. Mrs. Tretheway will be wondering what we are talking about. I see she is looking at us."

The girl looked up at the upper window indicated by Gilmartin, and Mrs. Tretheway whom he had observed there withdrew hastily.

"I can't understand mother," she said, reddening as she saw the movement.

The detective smiled and held out his hand.

"Don't worry," he said gently. "That won't help at any rate."

"I wish I knew what *would* help," she replied despondently, returning Gilmartin's handclasp gratefully.

"Oh—er—by the way," the Irishman said, pulling the silk scarf from his pocket as if he had just thought of it—"This is yours, I believe. I found it——"

"That?" Miss Tretheway exclaimed, examining it. "Never! I never wore such a thing."

"Sorry"—Gilmartin returned the scarf to his pocket—"Your mother seemed to think it was yours."

The girl stared at him.

"But mother knows perfectly well what I have," she said. "And—but what *can* mother be thinking of? I don't understand her."

She turned away with a half sob, and Gilmartin raising his hat left her.

"Precisely," he muttered to himself as he crossed the beach. "What *is* the good lady playing at?"

CHAPTER XIII

MORE ALARUMS

IN the solitude of his bedroom Gilmartin, having unlocked a drawer in his dressing-table, drew it forth and placed it on his bed. Spread out on its bottom were the papers which he had found in the salvaged car, together with the pocket-book in which some of them had been contained. They were not yet quite dry, but were, nevertheless, more easy to handle than in their previous sodden condition.

A few Treasury notes the detective placed to one side. A Bank of England note for five pounds he took up and examined. In his notebook he then made a note of its number.

"H'm!" he said to himself. "First thing to do is to trace the origin of that."

A piece of newspaper torn in the shape of an irregular triangle did not apparently interest him much, for after reading the fragmentary sentences printed on it, he laid it aside. The next paper, however—obviously a leaf torn from an ordinary school copy-book—excited more than passing notice. Upon it, in block capitals was written the following curious medley:

"TPXTN ENGCZ VOCAT CEBCG GCTRV ITCGL RFVQM KAVQC VOUEP."

"Humph!" Gilmartin grunted. "I wish I knew more about ciphers. This is a job for old Tucker."

Tucker was the code expert at Scotland Yard.

Another piece of paper undoubtedly from the same

or a similar copy-book was also covered with a cryptic message in block capitals, but as far as the detective could judge written by a different hand from the other one. It ran as follows :

" ELHQP WJHYL 3YQLJ KPXPK EUGHK EKNGH LPQYQ JAG3P WO3PV KEUGF HIHGK Y23YW QWG2G HY3KG JT3KP AAHYD FY3KY Q3F3I YJKAY LTPWU GIGAP JYPWX Y3KPO LKPWO."

With a sigh of disappointment, Gilmartin laid both papers on his counterpane and made a pencilled note.

He then took up again the newspaper fragment. Seeing that on one side was an advertisement for somebody's loud speakers, he turned the paper over idly in his hand and nearly shouted with glee as he read :

" Two coded selections will be given daily in the following papers :—

(Then followed a list of popular daily papers, English, Irish and Scottish.)

2 L U H T E J C W I V S Z Q

A M R F K Y N P X B 3 O G D

How to read the code : In place of the letters or figures advertised in the daily papers read those above or below the line as the case may be.

QYOYUK PFBYH would read DESERT CHIEF.

This code will be changed in next week's "

The clipping ended here, thus depriving the detective of the knowledge of the name of the paper.

" However," he said, " It doesn't matter. It's a weekly, that's clear ! "

On a blank page at the back of his notebook he began to work out the meaning of the two messages, but with the first few letters he realised that by

following the rule given he merely produced a jumble as meaningless as the originals.

" H'm ! " he muttered. " Too much for me."

The machine gun-like rat-tat of a motor cycle outside attracted his attention and he went to his window. Constable Treleaven, in the sports coat and grey flannel trousers of a Sunday tripper, had turned the corner down to the sea front and was even then alighting and preparing to prop his machine by the railing which ran along the cliff top. Beyond a look in the direction of " Ocean View " the young policeman gave no sign that he was interested in any of its tenants. Gilmartin smiled as he saw him direct his steps towards the cliff path and draw from his pocket a chunk of bread which he proceeded to break and throw to the already hovering vociferous gulls.

" Not such a fool, after all ! " the detective reflected as he reached for his hat.

A minute later he was walking towards the constable who was apparently wholly absorbed in satisfying the voracious appetites of the birds. As soon, however, as Gilmartin was within earshot, Treleaven said, without turning his head :

" I posted the letter. It went off all right."

" Right ! " the detective approved, looking up at the wheeling gulls, and to all appearances interested in nothing else. " Have you any idea where Inspector Straker and Superintendent Liddell are ? " he asked.

" Yes, sir," the constable replied, still occupied with his distribution of food. " I heard the inspector say that he was meeting the superintendent over to Rock at five o'clock."

" Look here ! " Gilmartin said, " lend me your motor-bike. I want to go over to Rock. You wait for me at The Mouls House."

" Yes, sir. Just take the bike from over there near the letter-box. She's got plenty of petrol in her."

In less than a minute, Gilmartin was chug-chugging on his way to the village on the Camel Estuary.

He found Liddell seated with Straker in a private room of the hotel at Rock, where the fact that the guardians of the Law were discussing whiskies and sodas on Sunday evening was not likely to offend the curious eyes of censorious Sabbatarians, who, in that, as in every other part of the Delectable Duchy, constitute themselves the keepers of their neighbours' consciences. Indeed, the lady to whom the Irishmen had addressed his inquiry as to their whereabouts had taken the precaution of warning them before replying definitely. On joining the local police-officers, Gilmartin with a smile also ordered a whisky and soda, and filled his pipe in silence while awaiting its arrival. After the first sip he plunged directly into an account of his examination of the papers.

"Now," he concluded. "There can be no doubt about one thing. A man in Tretheway's position who receives messages in cipher is up to something which will not bear the light of day. It may be something which he wants to hide from his family or it may be more serious—from our point of view, that is to say. He may not like inquiry into his affairs by people like ourselves. In either case it's worth inquiring into. The first thing to do, of course, is to decode these two messages. The key I found doesn't fit and——"

"May I see that key?" Straker interrupted. "Have you got it with you?"

"Yes," Gilmartin replied. "Here it is."

Inspector Straker read the clipping to the end.

"You know what this is?" he asked the detective.

"I think so," the latter answered. "It's a newspaper code, isn't it? For racing tips. But it doesn't help. The messages cannot be deciphered by it."

"True," Straker agreed, "but it is changed every week. Perhaps some other week's code would help."

"Perhaps," Gilmartin retorted. "But first of all you've got to find out the name of the paper itself, and then you don't know when these things were written.

Then again, you don't even know whether this is the sort of code that has been used."

"That all may be," the inspector agreed, "though I'm not in much doubt about it being that sort of code. Look at all those twos and threes. Of course I really know nothing at all about it, but I have a son—a lad of fifteen—who's mad on such things. I've heard him talk about these newspapers racing codes and I know that there's not more than two or three weeklies that have them. If you'll let me have a copy of the messages and of this clipping I'll pit my lad against your London man to solve them."

"Right oh, then," Gilmartin laughed. "Make your copies, but I'll send copies to Tucker as well."

"Good!" Straker replied and began to make his copies.

"Another thing," Gilmartin resumed. "If the answer to the letter I sent to-day is what I think it is going to be, I shall have to go up to London on Tuesday. In that case I shall want help here—somebody who knows the district and local conditions generally. You as Cornishmen know yourselves how distrustful your Cornishman is of "foreigners" as he calls us. What I want is somebody who can mix with the people here and extract from them every ounce of information and even gossip about Amos Tretheway and his affairs."

"I understand," Straker replied. "But as I was just saying to the superintendent before you came in, I haven't enough men to go round. We have our own routine work and here we have this case, and as if that wasn't enough another over at Padstow."

Gilmartin turned to Liddell.

"Well," he said, "it's up to you, superintendent. Give Straker somebody or get me one or two of your detective-sergeants or constables from County Headquarters. Yes, I think that would be best. But they must be men who know this part of the county."

Liddell pondered a moment.

" Yes," he replied. " I daresay it will have to be managed. I'm going to Newquay to-morrow morning and I'll ask the Chief Constable to send you the men you want. By the way, you were talking a moment ago as if you had something up your sleeve. Have you got a theory ? "

" Good Heavens, no ! " Gilmartin exclaimed, " I never have theories until I have something to base them on. But here's one for you all the same. Suppose instead of young Aylward having done away with Tretheway it were the other way about."

" By Gosh ! " Straker exclaimed, " That's an idea ! It wouldn't surprise me in the least. The old man is terribly strong."

" Rot ! " the superintendent replied with a decisive shake of the head. " You people seem to persist in forgetting what I saw through the old man's window ! "

" No," the Irishman contradicted. " I don't forget that. In fact I thought we had discussed fairly fully the limitations imposed by what you saw, but my latest information is that the old man in spite of his age was a stronger and more muscular man than Aylward."

" Yes," Straker repeated, " he is—or was."

Gilmartin drew from his pocket the photographs given him by Mrs. Tretheway and handed them to the inspector.

" Is that Aylward ? " he asked.

" Yes," Straker replied at once, and passed the cards to Liddell. " And the other is Tretheway."

" Is that the man you saw in the old man's room ? " Gilmartin interrogated, pointing to the photograph of Aylward.

The superintendent hesitated.

" I shouldn't like to swear either way," he replied finally. " You see this is a full face view and I only saw the profile of the man in the room. But it's undoubtedly the same sort of beard."

" I shall try and obtain a side view photo," the detective promised, replacing the photographs in his pocket.

" Oh, by the way," Liddell suddenly exclaimed. " It has just occurred to me that I never told you what one of the maids heard on the night of the attack. I questioned them and one of them told me that she slept in the attic room over Tretheway's bedroom."

" Yes," Gilmartin interrupted with a smile. " And she was awake and heard Tretheway say : " Let go, you fool, I'll explain in a minute." "

" Ah ! " Liddell exclaimed, " You questioned her too."

" Yes," the detective smiled, " But there's one thing that has struck me since I did so."

" Oh ! What was that ? "

" How was she able to hear from her room on such a noisy, stormy night ? "

Liddell looked crestfallen.

" By Jove," he said.

" Then she was lying ? "

" It doesn't follow that if she was lying in one respect her evidence in others has no importance," was the detective's cryptic answer. " But I'll be better able to tell you what I make of her statements when I get that answer to my letter of to-day."

" Oh, by the way," Straker exclaimed. " Did Treleaven get back from Wadebridge ? I told him to get into plain clothes and hang around Polreath beach where you could see him, but not to go barging in on you."

" Oh, he's all right," Gilmartin laughed. " I found him feeding the gulls on the cliff. In fact I came down here on his motor-bike. But your mention of him reminds me of another matter. Is that girl here who was in the bar on the evening Treleaven was drugged ? "

" No, it appears that this is her evening out."

"Pity!" the detective commented. "I should like to have met her. However, get a sworn statement from her. It might come in useful yet."

"I'll see to that to-morrow morning first thing." Straker promised. "I shall be down this way because of a case I have to investigate over in Padstow."

"A serious one?" Gilmartin asked.

"I don't think so," Straker replied. "Curiously enough it is a disappearance also. A girl—fisherman's daughter employed in a milliner's shop and a flighty bit o' goods—has disappeared. Took the train for Plymouth a couple of days ago and hasn't come back. I daresay it's the old story. My sergeant over there tells me that she was seen at the station with a commercial traveller who was paying a lot of attention to her."

Straker stood up.

"I must be moving," he decided.

After the inspector's departure Gilmartin and Liddell sat on in the hotel talking of different matters not concerning the case in hand, but partaking, nevertheless, of the nature of "shop." Finally, realising that it was too late to return for the evening meal at Miss Tansey's establishment they decided to dine where they were. It was already dark when they left the hotel and Gilmartin proceeded to light the acetylene lamp of the motor-cycle.

He was already astride and Liddell was preparing to settle on the pillion behind him when a shout in the distance attracted their attention. Gilmartin turned the headlight in the direction from which it came and in the glare they saw a man pedalling furiously towards them on a bicycle. As he approached they saw that it was a lady's cycle much too small for its rider and not geared for such as he. It was only when the oncomer was within a few yards that they recognised Constable Treleaven. He had evidently recog-

nised his own motor-cycle for he rode directly towards the two men and threw himself off his mount. Between spasms of panting they heard him exclaim :

" Oh ! Phew ! Sorry, sir ! There's trouble at Polreath ! House burgled. Mr. Duncan hurt and kidnapped ! "

CHAPTER XIV

YOUTH'S WAY

KITTY TRETHEWAY, more perturbed than she would have admitted not only at Gilmartin's threat to arrest her mother, but also at the attitude of the latter which made such a threat necessary, retired after the detective's departure to one of the garden seats facing the sea, where with hands clasped in her lap she endeavoured to puzzle out for herself a solution of the mystery which centred round her parents' house and enveloped all its occupants with the sole exception of herself. She had come to certain conclusions in her own mind when she was aroused to consciousness of her surroundings by the crunch of footsteps on the gravel path behind her. Turning round she recognised the advancing figure, and called out :

"Come over here, Jimmy. I want to talk to you."

Duncan obeyed with alacrity.

"Well," he said with an endeavour to be cheerful. "That's something to the good in any case. You haven't been exactly pining for my company these days, old thing."

"Oh, my dear," the girl replied, making room for him on the seat beside her. "You know why. It isn't that I——"

"I know, Kitty, I know," Duncan interrupted and drew her towards him. "I wish we could get to the bottom of this business and back to our normal ways again."

"It's about that I want to speak to you, Jimmy," Kitty said. "I have just been talking with Mr. Gilmartin."

"Seems a good sort," Jimmy remarked.

"Yes, I like him," the girl went on. "But do you know, he told me that he might have to arrest mother."

"No!"

"Yes, Jimmy!"

"He was only bluffing—trying to frighten you into telling him what he wanted to know."

"No," Kitty denied vigorously. "He was perfectly serious. He knows that I can tell him nothing. He believed me when I said so."

"Good Lord!" the young man exclaimed. "But no, Kitty. These detectives are up to all sorts of tricks."

"Perhaps so!" the girl nodded. "But honestly, Jimmy, what do you think of mother's attitude? Doesn't it look strange, even to you who know her so well? What must the police think?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," Duncan admitted, "I can't understand her at all. It's not like her a bit."

"That's what frightens me," Kitty interjected.

"But she must have some good reason for it," the young man went on thoughtfully. "I wonder if——"

"I have come to a conclusion, Jimmy," the girl interrupted. "A horrid one, I know, and I hardly like to tell it even to you, but I can't see anything else."

"What is it? Go on, old thing, you can say anything to me. You know that."

The young man gave her arm a confidential and confidence-inspiring squeeze.

"I know," Kitty replied. "But it is really nasty of me to think of it."

She paused.

"Come on, old dear," Jimmy insisted with assumed playfulness. "You couldn't be nasty if you tried."

"It's this, Jimmy," the girl began hesitatingly. "It's a matter—I mean, has it ever occurred to you that it might be a case of another woman?"

She looked at her companion as if frightened at her own suggestion.

"M-m!" Duncan grunted non-committally, but without surprise.

"Then it *has* occurred to you," Kitty exclaimed excitedly, gripping his arm.

"M'm, yes," the youth admitted. "But I don't see how it fits in."

"But it does."

"Well, I don t see it."

"Then how?" the girl asked. "Then how—why did you think of such a thing?"

"Well, you see, Kitty," Duncan began apologetically. "You know that your father and I don't hit it off very well together, in fact he hates me, Lord knows why! And——"

"I know," Kitty agreed. "He says that you are being spoiled by having too much money of your own. He says that young men should start life like he did—without a penny. But what has all that got to do with what we were talking about?"

"Nothing much," Duncan replied. "Except this: your father never makes any secret of the fact that he doesn't like me and everybody knows it, so they are not shy of talking in front of me. Mouching round the countryside I hear a lot and your father—well, you see, people don't give him a very good name in that respect."

"How awful!" the girl exclaimed. "I didn't know that! My own father! How disgusting!"

Duncan, was embarrassed at the turn their conversation had taken and distressed at the sobs which now broke from his companion, made clumsy and inexperienced efforts to calm her.

"Don't worry, old thing," he concluded. "You're not responsible for what he does after all. Let's talk of something else."

Kitty sat up and released herself from the embrace in which he held her.

"No!" she said firmly, repressing the tears which were still welling up in her eyes. "I'm a fool! On the contrary, let's talk of nothing else!"

"All right!" Duncan agreed resignedly. "But what's the use?"

"I want to know what's happened, and now I know," was the somewhat illogical reply. "You see, now you agree with me."

"I'm hanged if I do!" Jimmy replied explosively. "At least, I'm hanged if I know whether I do or not. I don't know what these conclusions are that you say you've come to."

"But," his companion insisted. "You've just said that people have been talking about father and other——"

"Women!" Duncan finished for her as she hesitated. "Since you wish to continue on that tack let's not be afraid of words! But I have just told you that I don't see how all that fits in with what happened on Friday night. And anyhow, if you haven't heard this talk about your father, how on earth have you concluded that there's a woman in the case?"

"There was the scarf," the girl began.

"What scarf? Oh, yes, the one that the detective found in the two-seater. Wasn't it yours or your mother's?"

"No," she answered, "but mother tried to make Mr. Gilmartin believe it was mine."

"I see," Duncan exclaimed. "Then you think your mother knows that your father was—er—well—unfaithful to her, and that she doesn't wish to talk about it?"

"Yes," Kitty replied. "Not only that, but I believe that the quarrel between father and Charlie was about the same thing. You know how fond Charlie is of mother, and a thing like that would simply make him furious. Mother, of course, would not want me to know anything about it."

"I understand," Duncan remarked calmly. "But you forget, Kitty, that Charlie and your father quarrelled some time about midnight and that Charlie left the house soon after. The superintendent

saw the attack on your father some minutes after one!"

"I know, but Charlie might have come back later and resumed the quarrel," the girl suggested.

"Never!" Duncan exclaimed, shaking his head vigorously. "Never, Kitty! I know Charlie. He's hot-tempered and all that, but he'd never come back an hour later to resume a quarrel. Hot tempered people don't do that. It's the sulky brooding ones that do it. I thought myself that the quarrel might have been caused by something that Charlie had found out in that line—I mean with regard to some woman or other—in fact I hinted as much to the superintendent, but when we got the times straight I threw it over."

"How then do you explain what the superintendent saw if Charlie didn't come back?" Kitty asked.

"I can't explain it, unless it was somebody who had a beard like Charlie's, and I can't imagine who has got such a noticeable one."

"Oh!" the girl suddenly exclaimed, "Why did I not think of him before?"

"Think of whom? Somebody you know who has a beard like that?"

"Yes," she replied. "But I can hardly believe it. He was really quite nice. Father treated him very badly, too, I think."

"Who on earth are you talking about?" Duncan asked in astonishment. "Whoever he is, he seems a likely bird. That's just the very thing. It's somebody who has been badly treated by your father!"

"Oh, I don't know!" the girl now demurred. "Emile would not come in the night and attack father like that, I'm sure."

"Who the dickens is Emile?" Jimmy asked. "Some sort of a foreigner?"

"Oh, of course, you didn't know him," Kitty exclaimed. "I forgot that you never saw him. He was a Belgian chauffeur who used to drive the Napier. Father sacked him before you came down here. He

said that it was for insolence, but I don't know. I remember they had a row one day in the garage, but I don't know why."

"Where is he now?" Duncan asked.

"I don't know," the girl replied. "But mother would know. He wrote to her for a reference when he was applying for a job somewhere. I'll ask her when we go in."

"If it was that chauffeur fellow, Kitty," Duncan argued, "how do you explain your mother's attitude? It looks as if she suspects Charlie."

"I don't understand it at all!"! Kitty declared despairingly.

"Nor I!"

"What can it all mean?"

"Heaven knows! But Kitty!" Duncan asked suddenly, "How did you come to find the superintendent and me in your father's room that night?"

"It was as I said," the girl replied. "I had heard sounds of a quarrel earlier, and when mother went up to her room I left mine and went in to hers and sat with her. When she dropped off to sleep I came away and found that I couldn't sleep myself, so I went downstairs for a book. I saw your boots in the hall and the wet footmarks across the floor. I went up to father's and Charlie's wing to see if anything was amiss, and saw the lights on. Why do you ask?"

"I wondered, that's all! But Heavens, if it had been earlier you'd have seen who attacked your father—and if it was a stranger—been attacked yourself in all probability! What a good thing for you it wasn't earlier."

"I'm sorry it wasn't," Kitty replied. "We should have known something at any rate. But now what are we to do? How are we to find out anything? I promised Mr. Gilmartin to help. Suggest something."

Duncan was thoughtful for a moment.

"Look here, Kitty!" he said finally. "You're quite right, we must find out what we can by every

means possible. Has your father any place where he keeps his private papers ? I think we should be justified in looking into them. We might discover from them whether he has enemies likely to do him in."

"Yes," Kitty agreed. "I think we should look through them. He keeps his most important papers, I believe, in his desk in his den—you know, the little room off the library."

"Very good, then. Let us go indoors. You tackle your mother upstairs in her room, and ask her outright about this woman business. Even if she evades your questions, you'll know by her manner if there's anything in it. Also put that chauffeur suggestion before her and see what effect it has on her. In the meantime I'll search for papers. It's seems rotten to do it, but——"

"It can't be helped," Kitty interrupted. "Let us do as you say, but we must have some tea first."

They had tea by themselves in the library, for Mrs. Tretheway remained in her room. Their conversation was no longer on the subject of the mystery, which had involved the household now that they had decided on some definite action. The meal—if such it could be called—was unduly prolonged, for they had much to tell each other, and the fact that it had all been told many times before did not render it any the more stale to them. It was, therefore, late when Kitty—somewhat tremulous—rose to go to her mother's room.

"I shall come in to you as soon as I have seen her," she said to the young man. "You have plenty of time. As you know, we have late cold supper on Sunday evenings."

Duncan was obliged to break open the desk for which he could find no keys, and almost from the first look at the topmost sheet of paper he found cause for amazement, and then horror. He read on and on through the heap he found, and no sound broke the silence save the rustle of the paper and his own heavy breathing. He continued to read and sort

the papers, and finally had to turn on the electric reading lamp which threw a glare across the desk and left the rest of the room in semi-darkness.

"Phew!" he whistled when he came to one particular sheet. "My stars: I wish Kitty would hurry! She would——"

The end of the phrase was a groan and the rest was darkness.

A minute later, Kitty Tretheway, coming down the stairs slowly and with a thoughtful expression on her face, was roused by an unaccustomed glare out on the road in the front of the house, as if a strong light had just been turned on. Arrived at the door, she saw the headlights of a powerful limousine. Wondering, she went forward towards the gate.

"Probably the police again," she reflected.

Suddenly she sprang into activity. A man had passed in front of the headlights, followed by two others carrying a bundle between them.

"Charlie!" the girl called. "Oh! Charlie!"

The headlights went out at once, but not before she had recognised the pale face, at one end of the bundle, which was being thrown into the car.

"Help! Help!" she screamed. "Murder! Help!"

The engine purred, the gears made a grinding noise, and the car sprang into sudden movement. Kitty continued to scream as she ran after the rapidly disappearing blur in the growing gloom.

Constable Treleaven came running out from the direction of the kitchen and overtook her.

CHAPTER XV

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

"WHY the—what the——" Liddell began, but Gilmartin caught hold of his arm. "Wait a moment, lad," the detective said to Treleaven. "Get your breath first and then talk—not before."

He led the panting constable over to a bench in front of the hotel, and made him sit down. Then turning the light of the motor-cycle away from them he sat down beside him. The superintendent imitated Gilmartin and sat down in silence.

"Now," said the detective, when he saw that Treleaven's breathing was becoming more normal, "tell us what happened."

"I was sitting in the kitchen at The Mouls House, sir," the constable began, "when I heard Miss Tretheway screaming at the front of the house. I dashed out and saw her running along the road after a big car which was going full speed with lights out——"

"In what direction?" Gilmartin interrupted.

"South, sir," Treleaven replied. "Towards the Wadebridge road. I overtook the young lady and tried to get her to tell me what was wrong, but she *would* keep on running. At last, sir, I made bold to catch hold of her by the arm and stop her. Then she came to herself and told me that three men had taken Mr. Duncan away in the car. I gathered, after a bit of questioning, that the young gentleman must have been hurt before being taken away, because Miss Tretheway saw them carrying him by the shoulders and the feet."

" What did you do then ? " Liddell asked.

" I got a key from the young lady, sir, and ran to the garage," the constable replied, " to take out the big car they have there. I can drive a car, and I thought I might be able to overtake them."

" And what would you have done if you had ? " Gilmartin asked, with a smile that nobody saw.

" Well, sir," Treleaven answered somewhat sheepishly, " I'm fairly hefty, and I thought I might be able to take them on if I could 'a' run into them from behind and damaged their car."

" And why didn't you ? "

" Because, sir, when I went to the garage I found it had been opened already and all the sparking plugs removed from the Napier."

" Well, I'm blessed ! " Liddell exclaimed.

" Yes, sir," the constable went on. " Then I went down to Fred Smale's that keeps the post-office to see if I could 'phone up Wadebridge and Camelford to have the car stopped, and also to get Fred's Ford; but the place was all shut up and they had all gone off for the day somewhere."

" Humph ! " Gilmartin grunted.

" Yes, sir," the constable continued. " So I went back to The Mouls House, sir. Miss Tretheway was with me all this time and much cooler-like in her mind, and she told me that Mr. Duncan had been in Mr. Tretheway's study looking at some of her father's papers, and that the men must 'a' come in and got him there, so I went with her to the study—the ' den ' she called it."

" What did you see there ? " Gilmartin asked as the other paused.

" Nothing much, sir," Treleaven said, gulping to allay the dryness of his throat. " Except that Mr. Tretheway's desk had been busted open and all the papers taken. Not as much as a scrap of blotting paper was left, sir. Likewise a little safe in the wall was wide open and nothing in it. Also, sir, a chair—

the one in front of the desk—was overturned and lying on the floor. It was a heavy office-chair, too, sir—not top-heavy either."

Gilmartin nudged Liddell in the darkness.

"Then, sir," the constable went on, "seeing as I could do nothing more, and that you'd likely be able to see more than me, I left the little room, sir, and made Miss Tretheway and her mother, who came down from her bedroom, when she heard the screaming, come out with me. Then I told the ladies to say nothing to anybody about what had happened, and I locked the door. After that I borrowed the young lady's bicycle and came on here as fast as I could, but it was bad going. Here's the key of the little room, sir."

Gilmartin took the key from the hand which he saw dimly in the darkness, and was silent for a moment.

"H'm!" he said then. "So Mrs. Tretheway came down when she heard the screams! Did you notice her face when she learned what had happened?"

"Yes, sir," Treleaven replied. "She looked kind o' frightened."

"When exactly was that?" Gilmartin went on. "When she heard that Mr. Duncan had been injured and carried off, or when she learned about the papers having been taken?"

"Both, sir, but more so like when she saw the desk and the little safe open and empty. Then she gave a kind of a start and began to move her lips without saying anything, as if she was saying a prayer, sir—at least, sir, that's what it looked like to me."

"Probably was!" Gilmartin muttered and asked: "Was the safe forced open, or opened with a key?"

"It was just open, sir," Treleaven replied, "as if somebody had opened it with a key and forgot to close it."

"H'm! No keys there?"

"No, sir."

Gilmartin rose. The others also stood up.

"Well, Treleaven," the detective said, "you've done all that a man could do in the circumstances. It's unfortunate in one way that the car was tampered with, on the other hand, we might have had a dead constable in Cornwall if it had been in working order, and we don't want that."

"I 'a' done my best, sir," the constable said self-consciously, "to get them fellows afore they'd 'a got me."

"I'm sure you would," the detective said, patting him on the arm. "But you'd better go home to your wife now. You'll have to foot it, I'm afraid, or ride that uncomfortable bike again because I want to keep your motor-cycle a bit yet. You can have it in the morning and let me know what the petrol costs."

"That's all right, sir. And it's only a couple of miles from here to St. Minfred."

"Well, good-night, Treleaven," Gilmartin dismissed him. "Come along to Polreath at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Yes, sir. Good-night, sir."

When the constable had disappeared into the darkness Gilmartin turned to Liddell.

"He's not so bad, after all," he said. "There's the makings of a good policeman in that lad."

"Yes," Liddell agreed. "I'll give him a chance in Bodmin later on, but it is a pity that car was out of order."

"It's a greater pity," Gilmartin said almost savagely, "that an English country Sunday is such a help to criminals!"

"How?" the superintendent asked. "What do you mean?"

"Telephones closed! Telegraph offices also!"

"We could telegraph from Bodmin," Liddell suggested feebly.

"Might as well say Bombay," Gilmartin snapped. "For all the good it would do us."

"However," he continued more smoothly, "we'd

better get back to Polreath at once and see that study and decide what can be done."

They were about to mount the motor-cycle again when the glare of strong headlights made them pause and turn away their faces. A small two-seater shaped like a canoe and gleaming in all the glory of shining aluminium shot up to the hotel door.

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" they heard, as the engine was shut off. "Gilmartin, old son, what is the distinguished sleuth doing in this part of the world?"

"Humph!" Gilmartin muttered to his companion. "That's Pepler of the *Planet*—newspaper man."

"Hello!" he shouted back. "The same to you! What are you doing here?"

"Supposed to be on a golfing holiday," the other replied, crawling out of his low seat. "But started badly. Should have been here for dinner, but my armoured cruiser broke down at a measly place called Delabole."

"Delabole!" the detective repeated and asked suddenly, "Did you meet a car on your way from there?"

"Yes," Pepler replied. "A big limousine! Met it as I came through a place called Endellion."

"Only there! They can't have been going fast!" Gilmartin exclaimed.

"Fair to middling," Pepler replied. "About thirty, I should say, but if you mean they should have been farther away, you're wrong. It is I that should have been here sooner. Lost my way. But why these questions, dear sleuth? I'm always willing to give the benefit of my unparallelled knowledge to the guardians of the public safety, but tit for tat, old son, and, therefore, I say: why these questions?"

"Oh! Shut up!" Gilmartin said shortly. "I'll tell you later—perhaps. Did you notice what sort of people were in that limousine?"

"Not particularly," the other announced, in no wise

offended by Gilmartin's manner. "But I did notice the driver. You see, they had only sidelights on, and I had these twin lighthouses of mine. The driver was a foreign looking johnnie with a pointed beard."

"You don't say!" Liddell ejaculated.

"I do!" Pepler affirmed. "I do, sir. These same lighthouses would pick up a pin on the road. But, sleuth dear, I smell a 'story'! Holiday or no holiday, I want that story. Gilmartin in Cornwall! Now that in itself is a story! For you didn't come down here just for fun, old bloodhound o' mine!"

During the newspaper man's chatter, Gilmartin turned so the light of his own lamp showed Liddell a significant look.

"Come into the hotel," the detective said, "and I'll give you a 'story.' You'll be the first, too."

"Cheers!" Pepler rejoiced. "Come on!"

"This is Seth Pepler," Gilmartin introduced when they reached the deserted smoking-room, "the most troublesome and the 'nosiest' newspaper man in London, and this is Superintendent Liddell of the Cornwall County Police. Now sit down."

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" pleaded Pepler, who in the light proved to be a small dapper man with fiery red hair and twinkling pale blue eyes. "Just let me get hold of a pencil and paper!"

"No!" Gilmartin jerked out suddenly. "On second thoughts, I'll do the writing."

"Wow!" the newspaper man exclaimed ruefully. "An official story!"

"But a good one," the detective retorted, "and exclusive! And look here, young fellow! You take this story from me or nothing, and to-morrow every paper will get it. If you take it I'll let you in first on every other development. Is it a bargain?"

"It's a go!" Pepler consented at once. "You're a square guy, sleuth, and won't let me down."

"Cut out the Americanisms, Pep," Gilmartin laughed, "and go and book your room while I write

your story. Then, as it's after hours for us, you, as a resident, can buy us a couple of drinks."

"Right-oh!" the newspaper man agreed and went off.

Gilmartin took up a sheet of hotel notepaper and wrote in silence for some minutes. By the time Pepler had returned with a sleepy but smiling waitress in tow to take their orders, he had nearly finished. When the girl had finally left them, after providing them with the refreshments ordered, the newspaper man began to read aloud the following :—

"'On Friday night –th. inst. The Mouls House, Polreath, North Cornwall, was the scene of mysterious happenings. Some time after midnight a chance wayfarer saw in a lighted room of the house a struggle take place between an elderly man clad in pyjamas and a younger, fully dressed man, whose most distinctive feature was a dark pointed beard. During the struggle the younger man was seen to throttle the other and throw him on the bed. Superintendent Liddell, of the Cornwall County Police, who was holidaying in the district, was thereupon called immediately and together with a Mr. James Duncan, a law student, and a friend of the owners of The Mouls House, proceeded to the house which stands on a cliff overlooking the Atlantic. There to their astonishment they found that both the elderly man, Mr. Amos Tretheway, and his assailant had disappeared. Upon inquiry it transpired that Mr. Tretheway had had a violent quarrel with his nephew, Mr. Charles Aylward, a Cambridge undergraduate, and that both men had left the house—presumably in their respective two-seaters. On the following day, Coastguard Maunders, of Trebetherick Station, patrolling the coast, discovered Mr. Tretheway's car in the sea at the foot of a cliff whence it had obviously fallen. Up to the present no body has been found, and the police have no clue as to Mr. Aylward's whereabouts. The mystery is

further deepened by the fact that on Sunday evening Mr. James Duncan, above mentioned, was attacked at The Mouls House and carried away by three unknown men in a fast car. The correspondent of the *Planet* describes the driver of a car which he met coming from the direction of Polreath as a foreign looking man with a pointed beard. Mr. Charles Aylward, one of the missing men, has a pointed beard of the same description."

Pepler looked up when he had finished—a quizzical look in his blue eyes.

"I get you!" he said. "It's a damn good story! They'll splash it all over the front page as things are slack this time of the year. That's all to the honour and glory of Seth Pepler, but you won't mind me telling you, Gilmartin, that there are gaps in the story that you could drive a Rolls-Royce through and back. However, I thank you, old sleuth. I'll work this up and send it off at once."

"How?" the detective asked with a smile. "There is no telegraph nearer than Bodmin or those kidnappers wouldn't be rolling along at thirty miles an hour so nicely."

"Then to Bodmin I'll go. This is too good a thing to miss for Monday morning's papers."

"Oh, then," Liddell broke in, "will you take a telegram and a message to the police-station there for me? We might get that limousine yet."

"Certainly," Pepler replied and began to translate his story into telegraphic journalese.

Liddell wrote something on a sheet of paper, put it into an envelope, and handed it to the red-haired scribbler. A few minutes later the aluminium racer was roaring through the night and Gilmartin led the way a third time to the motor-cycle.

But they were not to be allowed to depart thus easily. A faint halloo came from the direction of the Estuary. It was repeated as Gilmartin wheeled the

cycle round and they hallooed back. A reply came to their hail and then they heard the rat-tat of an engine. A few minutes later they saw in the light of the lamp the bulky form of Inspector Straker, knee-deep in sand struggling towards them.

"Ah! By Glory, I'm glad you haven't gone," that worthy exclaimed. "I thought that light was you. I want to tell you something."

"Yes?" Gilmartin asked, still holding the handlebars.

"Yes," Straker went on. "You know I went over to make inquiries about a girl having disappeared? Well, I don't believe she went off with that commercial traveller at all, because——"

"All right!" Liddell interrupted severely, "but what on earth has that got to do with us? It's your business entirely and a report could wait till to-morrow, in any case. We don't want to worry Chief-Inspector Gilmartin with that sort of thing."

"Perhaps so, Superintendent, perhaps so," Straker agreed imperturbably. "But it might interest Chief-Inspector Gilmartin, after all. That's why I took the trouble of routing out a man to take me across at this hour. You see, it appears—or, at least, so the Padstow gossips say—that this girl used to cross over here very often and go riding in a car with an elderly gentleman whose description suggests Mr. Amos Tretheway in an extraordinary way. It appears also that she dressed in a way that her earnings or her father's didn't warrant. Now, all that is only gossip, mind you, but I thought it as well to let you know."

"Quite right, Straker," Gilmartin approved. "It may be important. Would you mind getting as good a description of the girl as you can, or a photo—and also of the commercial traveller."

"Yes," Straker replied. "I'll let you have 'em to-morrow."

Gilmartin then informed Straker of the latest happenings at The Mouls House, leaving the Inspector gasping.

" Good-night ! " the detective said finally and gave the starting lever a kick.

" By Jove ! " he said across his shoulder, when they had travelled nearly a mile. " I'm glad Pepler wasn't there when Straker told us about that girl."

" Yes," Liddell agreed. " It would have been awkward for Mrs. Tretheway if he had published that."

" It would have been a lot more awkward for me," Gilmartin retorted and put on extra speed.

" That was a funny story you gave that reporter," the superintendent said after a few minutes. " He is sure to find out a lot more for himself soon."

" I don't mind," Gilmartin replied. " So long as his paper prints that. Don't worry, Pepler wasn't gulled. He's too good a journalist for that ; he knew exactly why I gave him that story and he'll not print anything which hasn't been vetted by me from this on. You heard our bargain. He gets first look-in on that condition. Oh, Pepler and I have worked together many a time. We know each other."

" Yes, but why *did* you give him that story ? " Liddell asked in bewilderment.

" To print it, of course," Gilmartin replied and chuckled.

CHAPTER XVI

A FEW LITTLE JOBS

THE story which the superintendent and Gilmartin drew from Miss Tretheway added little to their knowledge of what had happened. The girl—now that her previous excitement had died down—was depressed and listless as, without awaiting any questions, she detailed her afternoon conversation with Duncan and told what she had seen of the abduction of the latter. At this point the detective asked:

"This man with the pointed beard? Did you recognise him?"

She hesitated.

"I thought I did at first," she admitted. "But now I am not so sure."

"You thought it was your cousin?"

"For a moment, yes," the girl replied. "But the headlights were turned off then, and I couldn't make sure."

"Humph!" Gilmartin remarked, pulling his ear-lobe thoughtfully. "That's interesting! However, we'd better examine the room where Duncan was sitting."

The examination did not last long. Liddell and Miss Tretheway stood at the door watching the detective's rapid but thorough inspection of the desk, safe and floor. Whether he found anything of interest or not they were unable to see, and Gilmartin himself said nothing until he had locked the door of the "den," and was on his way towards the hall. Then he merely asked in a casual tone:

"And Mrs. Tretheway? She has gone back to bed, I presume!"

"Yes," the girl answered.

She was nervous and her lips twitched, as she appeared to be deliberating with herself whether she should say any more. Liddell was walking on in front and the girl slowed down to allow Gilmartin, who was behind her, to come up level with her.

"What does she think of all this?" the detective pursued.

"I—I—Mr. Gilmartin!" Kitty said in a low tone, "I should like to see you alone for a moment, if possible."

"All right!" was Gilmartin's matter-of-fact reply, "I'll arrange that."

"Don't worry about waiting for me, Liddell," he called out in a louder tone, "if you'd like to get off to bed. I'll find my way across easily."

The superintendent turned.

"Oh!" he replied. "I don't mind w——"

He caught the meaning look in Gilmartin's face and understood.

"Well, yes," he corrected himself. "Perhaps I'd better get some sleep. I'll have to be off early to-morrow. Good-night, Miss Tretheway! Good-night, Gilmartin!"

When he had gone Kitty led the detective back into the library and there, seated in deep arm-chairs, they talked for nearly an hour. At first Gilmartin's part in the conversation was confined chiefly to punctuating remarks and nods, showing that he was following what the girl was saying, and later to a number of questions which Miss Tretheway answered with little or no hesitation. When she had finished speaking the detective made a few shorthand notes and then rose. The girl also stood up.

"Well, Miss Tretheway," Gilmartin said with that soft smile which made him so popular with women and children, "you are too young to have all these

cares on your shoulders, so try and think of other things."

"That is not very easy," the girl replied with an attempt at returning the smile.

"I know that! I know that!" the detective repeated. "But don't worry. Things might be worse. Now, isn't that so?"

"Yes," she admitted. "I suppose so. But poor mother—she is——"

"That's all right!" Gilmartin comforted her, patting her shoulder in a way which in another man she would have found impertinent. "Tell your mother from me that she is to the best of my belief worrying uselessly about that aspect of it."

The girl's eyes were full of tears, but she held them back as she asked:

"Do you really think they haven't killed Jimmy—Mr. Duncan?"

"I'm sure they haven't," Gilmartin replied. "It's my opinion they saw that he had found out something from those papers, and they have taken him away so that he may say nothing until they can disappear."

"But I am sure they could never have taken him unless they knocked him unconscious," Kitty objected.

"Yes," the detective retorted. "Possibly, but there is a big difference between giving a man a knock-out and killing him."

"And a small one sometimes," the girl persisted.

"Oh! come now!" Gilmartin laughed. "You are really too pessimistic altogether. Don't—as they say in my part of the world—don't bid the devil good-morrow till you meet him!"

Kitty smiled feebly and the detective held out his hand, pressing hers encouragingly.

"And," he continued, "get Mrs. Tretheway to give you the address that Belgian chauffeur wrote from last. That's a point we must clear up. Give the address to Liddell or Straker. I'll explain to them exactly what I want done. That's all, I think. Now it's bed-

time, so go to sleep and don't worry. I don't think you'll have any more visits from those gentry."

On his way across the beach to "Ocean View" Gilmartin saw that Liddell's candle was still burning, and when he reached the boarding-house he directed his steps towards the superintendent's room. An invitation to enter followed his discreet knock, and the detective found the Cornishman in pyjamas sitting on his bed.

"Well?" Liddell asked, "did the young lady tell you anything she didn't tell me?"

Gilmartin laughed.

"A little!" he replied. "Quite a little, in fact! But whether what she told me helps or not is another matter. She did one thing, however."

"What was that?" the superintendent asked.

"Suggested a motive for all these goings-on."

"H'm!" Liddell nodded. "That is always a help."

"Yes," Gilmartin replied, "provided the motive suggested is the right one. If it isn't, it only complicates matters more. In any case, old man, there's not a bit of use my staying here any longer. I'm off to Town to-morrow morning."

"What!" the superintendent exclaimed. "To London?"

The detective nodded.

"Lord!" Liddell opened his eyes in astonishment. "You're not giving up the case, are you?"

"Decidedly not!" Gilmartin replied emphatically. "I'm only getting my teeth into it properly, but I have an idea that I'll be able to work better from the Yard than from here. I'll want your help down here, of course."

"We'll give you that all right!" the superintendent promised, "if you'll just let us know what you want. I'm entirely in the dark, myself, I don't mind telling you."

"I don't wonder," the detective replied. "I'm only groping in a sort of twilight myself."

"Well!" Liddell said, rising and taking a notebook and pencil from the table, "if you want to get to London to morrow you'll have to leave early, so you'd better tell me to-night what you want done."

"Right!" Gilmartin agreed, drawing forth his own notebook. "In the first place, have your people go thoroughly into that case of the disappearance of the girl at Padstow. She must be found!"

"So you think there's a connection?" the superintendent asked, making a careful note as he did so.

"Of course there's a connection," the detective replied, "It may be a slight one or it may be a close one, but it's there."

"Yes. And then?"

"Then," Gilmartin went on, "I want a history of that commercial traveller she's supposed to have gone with. I want him found also, even if she is not with him, and if necessary detained. I also want a list made of all the girl's associates—male and female—and their life and habits gone into."

"We'll do our best," Liddell murmured.

"Then," the detective continued, "I want old man Tretheway's antecedents gone into very thoroughly, in the same way."

"That's more difficult," the superintendent remarked.

"Perhaps it is," Gilmartin agreed dryly. "But it's got to be done. I also want that sailing vessel you saw on Friday night found. It was going north, you said, and close inshore, so it's not likely that it's far away. There is a fairly efficient machinery in existence for finding it, so you'll have to put it in movement—and quickly."

Liddell—a modest man, who knew his own limitations—did not resent this tone of command coming from a man lower in rank than himself when the

man was of Gilmartin's forceful personality. He nodded.

"Of course," the detective continued, "the search for the cars—young Aylward's and to-night's artists'—must be prosecuted as diligently as possible. To-morrow Miss Tretheway will give you or Straker the address of a former chauffeur of theirs—a Belgian. He's got to be found."

Liddell turned a page of his notebook and again nodded.

"Another thing," Gilmartin went on, "if you are not here yourself, get Straker to collect any letters that may arrive here for me and to open them—all except one with a "G" in the left-hand bottom corner, which must be re-directed to me unopened. It'll be from my wife."

The superintendent smiled comprehension.

"If," the detective continued, "one of them contains a solution of the code messages, I'll probably know it as soon as you, but it may suggest to you some action you may be able to take locally. Another may contain photographs. If so, show them to Constable Treleaven and to that barmaid at Rock. They may be able to identify a couple of them. If so, let me know."

Gilmartin paused.

"That all?" Liddell asked.

"Yes, I think that's about all," the detective replied, "except that it might be as well to have a plain-clothes man posted somewhere day and night, where he can see everybody that goes and comes through the gate at The Mouls House, and be ready to help those ladies if need be. I don't suppose for a moment that it will be necessary, but it never does to miss anything. You might also ask the coastguards to keep a special look-out from the cliffs on the other side of the House, not that I expect much from that either. And as regards that two-seater that was hauled out of the sea, let it remain locked up and let nobody touch it till the

finger-print chap from the Yard, that I've sent for, has had a good look at it."

"Quite a few little jobs," Liddell laughed. "One division of the Cornwall County Police won't be idle for some time."

"Do 'em good, as Coastguard Maunders would say," Gilmartin replied, and rose to go to his room.

CHAPTER XVII

GUIDE AND GOSSIP

GILMARTIN did not catch the first train for London on Monday morning, after all. On the way to Wadebridge, with Liddell, their hired car met a noisy Ford packed with some of the plain clothes men who had been sent to Polreath by the Chief Constable, at the superintendent's telegraphed request of the evening before. The Scotland Yard man insisted on stopping and personally instructing the newcomers, there and then, in their rôles. After a few minutes' conversation with them he had sized them up, individually and collectively, and distributed the different tasks among them in a manner which Liddell, looking on, considered masterly. By the time the group on the roadside had re-entered the cars, Gilmartin declared that it was useless to try to catch the London train. He turned down Liddell's suggestion that he try to overtake it at one of the stations between Wadebridge and Launceston, and declined to be rushed on to Bodmin Road on the chance of making the connection at Plymouth with the Riviera Express.

"No," he said, "I never hurry, except when urgent action is required. It disturbs my mental processes. Just now an hour or so will not matter very much, and even if it did I prefer to wait for the next train."

Finding that he had some hours to wait, he proposed to the superintendent that they stroll round the town and view its curiosities. Liddell grunted and waved his hand in a circular sweep.

"You see them all," he said. "There's nothing else to see."

They were standing in the middle of the " Plat "—evidently the centre of the town's feebly-pulsing life—and the view was indeed uninspiring, consisting of a garage, a row of tiny shops and a public convenience faced by a row of cottages, a Methodist chapel, the Town Hall, whose porch was decorated with posters illustrating some picture drama of the Wild and Woolly West, and a public house.

" Oh, I don't know about that," Gilmartin replied, nevertheless. " That was a curious bridge we passed over just now—with the niches for the safety of foot passengers."

" Yes," Liddell admitted grudgingly " But I know very little about it. I do wish, however, that they'd widen and raise it a bit and do something about that level crossing at this end of it. As it is it means keeping a man there all the time regulating traffic."

The detective laughed heartily.

" I see," he said. " That's the police point of view, not the antiquarian. I wonder what's the age of the bridge ! "

" Lord knows ! I don't ! "

" Fifteenth century, surr ! " came the voice of the chauffeur who had driven them in, and who had just parked the car in a corner of the " Plat."

" And how do *you* know ? " the superintendent snapped.

" Well, surr ! " the man replied, " I drive a lot o' they furriners in summer and it's always the first question they axes when they sees it, so I axed Vicar. And over there to Egloshayle "—he pointed across the river—" there's a church of fifteenth century too."

" Humph ! " Liddell grunted, absolutely uninterested.

The detective laughed again.

" All right ! " he said to his Cornish colleague, " I see you don't feel like trotting around. Perhaps our friend—what's his name—won't mind showing me things."

"Not a bit, surr," the chauffeur agreed. "I've nothing to do but wait for the London papers, and they don't come for another hour. And they call me Tony, surr."

"Good!" Liddell approved. "I get enough walking in the course of duty. You go ahead, I'll see you at the station ten minutes before train time. I'll go along to the Police Station and perhaps to a dentist, if there is one here. This toothache has started again."

He stood and watched the others as they walked away over the level crossing, and observed that Gilmartin seemed already to be deriving some amusement from his conversation with the chauffeur, for the detective's laugh reached his ears more than once. Suffering as he was from a recurrence of his toothache, he might not have appreciated at its full value the chauffeur's first remark as soon as they were out of his hearing.

"I dunno when that there fifteenth century wur myself, surr," the lad—who was chauffeur and farm hand combined—said confidentially, and then, after a pause, "I haven't had as much schoolin' as that gen'l'man, but I'll make bold to say as there's a few things I knows as he don't."

Gilmartin looked sharply aside at his companion, but the expression of the chauffeur's face was one of bovine indifference—almost too much so, the detective reflected, but he made no sign.

"I daresay," he replied with an equal indifference, and began to ply the young fellow with questions about the district. He was a well-informed youth, and told the Irishman much that was of interest to a man of his culture and—as he himself would put it—curiosity. The conversation finally turned on local folk lore and traditions—from the legend of Dozmary Pool to the more recent history of wreckers on the Cornish coast. Gradually from this Gilmartin drew him out until he talked of still later events, some of

them interesting and some the reverse, but the detective was patient. He knew that as a "foreigner" he could not hope to make this Cornish yokel talk frankly unless he had first of all gained his confidence and good will. It was, therefore, only when on their way back from the fifteenth century church of Egloshayle that the subject of conversation was Amos Tretheway, the vanished owner of The Mouls House.

"He wur a curious man, was Mr. Tretheway," the chauffeur volunteered. "You nivver knowed what he'd be doin' next."

"An eccentric sort of beggar, eh?" Gilmartin advanced carefully.

"Yes, surr, that'd be the word for he," the other agreed. "That's what I've heerd some o' my passengers call'n."

"Indeed?" Gilmartin interjected as a comment seemed to be expected.

"Yes, surr."

"Why?" the detective asked. "Did visitors to Polreath have much to do with him?"

"Not a whole lot, surr," the chauffeur replied. "But you couldn't be long down to Polreath without fallin' foul o' the ole man. He wur a fair terror, he wur, drivin' 'em away from his bit o' foreshore. Why, surr, he'd stand there on the cliff all day on the off-chance of catchin' someone trespassin'."

"Not very nice of him, I agree," Gilmartin remarked. "But still lots of people don't like trespassers."

"You'm right there, surr, they don't," the lad conceded. "But there's not many'd take a stick to 'em like ole man Amos. But there was other things as well."

"What sort of things? His driving out at night?"

"Well, he wur funny that way, surr. An ole man o' his years, too. Many a time I've been drivin' a party o' furriners home late at night after a long day's outin' and been nearly shoved into the ditch by that

there big Napier o' his'n, an' the ole boy sittin' at the wheel tearin' along like mad."

"What!" Gilmartin exclaimed. "The Napier? Not the two-seater?"

"Oh, I've seen un drivin' the two-seater o' nights too," the chauffeur replied, "but it wur mostly the Napier."

"I wonder why!" the detective reflected aloud.

"There be tales," the lad said with a heavy wink. "There be tales about that, surr, but I'm not talkin', seein' as I knows nothin' for dead shew-er."

"What? Women?" Gilmartin asked crudely.

"Maybe so, maybe not," said Tony. "I'm not sayin', but one o' my passengers one night 'e says to me: 'Tony, there's someone inside that there Napier and it looks to me like a woman.' I said nothin', it not bein' my business, and another time I seed a woman in there myself with a lot o' boxes and trunks with her and luggage on the grid. I'm not sayin' who she might be, but it wurn't Mrs. Tretheway, for she wur to home. Now *there's* a nice lady, surr! And the young lady too, Miss Kitty! Not a bit like a daughter o' his'n."

"I see you don't like the old gentleman, Tony," Gilmartin laughed.

"Not particular, I didn't," Tony admitted. "But seein' he's dead what's the use o' talkin'?"

"So you think he's dead?"

"Well, surr, by all accounts he hasn't much chance o' bein' alive, has 'e now?"

Tony's question seemed merely rhetorical but the look in his eye was that of one fishing for information, so Gilmartin asked:

"Who do people think killed him?"

"Ah!" the chauffeur exclaimed, "there you have me, surr. People dunno what to think, but I dunno, I dunno!"

"What do you think yourself, Tony?"

Tony cocked an eye at the detective and was silent for a moment.

"Well, surr," he said finally, "namin' no names, seein' as I don't know any, I'll axe you a question: What would *you* do if a girl o' your's was gallivantin' about with an ole man old enough to be 'er father?"

"H'm!" was all the reply Gilmartin made for a minute.

"What I would do," he said finally, "would probably be quite different from what my next-door neighbour would do. If I knew who you are talking about I might tell you what he was likely to do."

"I don't know myself, surr," Tony admitted. "I'm only thinkin' what's the most likely thing as might happen."

"And what about young Aylward?" the detective asked. "Do you not think he killed the old man?"

"Mr. Aylward!" the other exclaimed indignantly. "Now don't 'ee be off on that tack, surr. He didn't do it! I know un too well. Many's the time me an' him's ferreted together and I know Mr. Aylward. He wouldn't do it, surr, not 'e!"

Gilmartin said nothing, and the chauffeur after a pause spoke again.

"An' young Mr. Duncan, sir?" he asked, directly this time. "What's happened to he? I heerd something about last night, sir,"

"I wish I knew, Tony," the detective answered frankly. "He has been kidnapped and perhaps badly hurt, and I'd like to find him."

They had now reached the level crossing and found its gates closed.

"That'll be for the down train, surr, from London," Tony volunteered, "An' your train'll be here in fifteen minutes."

They crossed the line by the overhead footbridge and found Liddell awaiting them on the "Plat." The chauffeur left them to go for his papers, pocketing Gilmartin's generous tip with a smile of thanks. The

superintendent and the detective paced the pavement in front of the station watching the arriving passengers come out. One of them attracted his attention—an elderly man in tweeds, pink cheeked and white moustached, evidently an old warrior turned squire, who was holding a London paper in his hand.

" Hello, Betty ! " he greeted a girl who was at the wheel of a small car to which a porter was tying a suitcase. " I got your telegram and came as soon as I could. Is it very bad ? "

" I'm afraid so, Dad. Hop in ! " the girl replied in a subdued tone.

The old man obeyed—not literally, for he was incapable of such an undignified action as hopping—still talking somewhat excitedly.

" To-day's paper"—Gilmartin heard in snatches—" Old bounder Tretheway—murdered or something—seem to think Charlie did it—Friday night—one o'clock in the morning—time to get away ! "

" Impossible ! " the girl exclaimed and slipped in the clutch with a jerk. " He couldn't——"

The roar of the engine as the car jumped forward drowned the rest and Gilmartin turned to Liddell.

" Who is that ? " he asked.

" I don't know," the superintendent replied, " I told you I don't know anybody around here yet."

" Try and find out," the detective directed. " Take the number of the car. That's the easiest way."

Liddell jotted down obediently the number of the disappearing car and they entered the station.

Suddenly the detective strode into the parcels office, where he put a question to the man in charge which the superintendent did not hear. He heard, however, the reply :

" Yes, sir, the old gentleman sent off a whole lot of luggage a week or ten days ago. To Waterloo it was. I'll find out the exact date for you, in a minute."

" What I want," said Gilmartin, " is not so much the date as the consignee's name and address."

"That I can tell 'ee now, sir," the man replied. "He always sent them addressed to himself to be called for at Waterloo."

"Humph!" the detective grunted, and walked away to buy his ticket.

Seated in his corner seat a few minutes later, Gilmartin leaned out and, as the train moved out, said to Liddell as he bade him good-bye:

"Do your damnedest, old man, to find out about that boat—that sailing vessel—you saw on Saturday morning."

Liddell walked back into the town wondering.

CHAPTER XVIII

SEAWEED IN MAIDA VALE

AS Gilmartin travelled Londonwards he saw from the papers which he bought on the way that Pepler had made a "scoop" with his account of Amos Tretheway's disappearance, for his was the only paper that "carried" the item. With that knack which the journalistic fraternities of London and New York possess to a degree unknown elsewhere, the meagre information supplied by the detective had been made to cover the entire front page of the *Planet*, and leave a little over for the favoured device of that particular organ as embodied in its coroneted live-wire proprietor's motto: "Keep 'em guessing!" Hence the "Continued on page eight." which made the reader turn over several sheets only to find a few insignificant phrases which told nothing new. The wily Gilmartin smiled and refused to be tempted.

"Humph!" he said to himself. "Not much news this time of the year. Poor old Straker will wonder what has happened to him when a crowd of the boys swoops down on him."

At Exeter he was impatiently pacing the platform awaiting the arrival of the restaurant-car which was to accompany the train to London, when he himself narrowly escaped the swoop of "the boys" in question, for he had just time to dodge behind a baggage truck when the train from Waterloo glided in, and from one of its carriages streamed forth a noisy crowd of Fleet Street's most pushing young men, now all travelling in company, though doubtless on arrival at Polreath

each would take good care to plough his individual furrow.

Gilmartin watched the last of the crowd enter the refreshment-room and quickly regained his seat, where a brilliant sunshine gave him a good excuse for lowering the blind. He had no desire to meet his friends of the Press for the simple reason that there was nothing that he felt justified in telling them. By the time they had ferreted out for themselves the information he possessed, he would, he was confident, be able to tell them all—or nearly all they wanted to know. He was glad, therefore, when the train moved out of the station, and shortly afterwards he was amusing himself and his chance *vis-à-vis* in the restaurant car by predicting the lunch menu: boiled cod with white sauce, roast mutton with potatoes and greens, cherry pie and camp coffee. He was not discouraged by the discovery that the fish was hake—not cod.

By the time he reached New Scotland Yard all the routine workers had departed from that rabbit warren of unexpected stairs and passages, but he found Assistant Commissioner Roche still busy at his desk. To him he reported.

"Well, old man," his chief said when he had finished, "I'm afraid we'll have to switch you off that case. There are other things more important than the disappearance of a somewhat disreputable old Cornishman, though of course that must be seen to as well. We mustn't let the country police think we cannot beat them at their own job. You think the solution is here in London, then?"

"I'm sure of it, sir," Gilmartin affirmed.

"Then you'd better hand it over to Peters," the Assistant Commissioner directed. "Give him all the information he needs and let him have a chance of showing his fitness to be an inspector."

Gilmartin smiled for he knew that his chief had consented to the promotion of the unimaginative Detective Sergeant Peters, only because of his own insistence.

"All right, sir," he said however, "I suppose you don't know if the photographic section or the cipher department sent anything to me in Cornwall."

"No," the Assistant Commissioner replied, "But you can find out easily in the morning. Come in and see me at ten. I've got a job for you after your own heart when you've handed over this thing to Peters."

"Oh?"—Gilmartin raised his eyebrows—"A job after my own heart? That must be——"

"Dope!" the Assistant Commissioner completed laconically.

"Naturally!" the chief-inspector remarked with a grimace, and rose. "Very good, sir. See you at ten. I must get along now to see if my home is still there."

Roche laughed.

"Oh, yes," he said. "She is still there. I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Gilmartin yesterday afternoon. Give her my regards."

"I will," laughed Gilmartin, "Good-night, sir."

"Good-night, Gilmartin."

At home in his Ealing flat Gilmartin was not surprised to find a meal ready and his slippers waiting before his favourite arm-chair. His wife, who had been an acute business woman before her marriage was now the ideal wife of a man whose hours—nay days—of leisure were perforce irregular, and never allowed herself to be taken unawares by his unannounced or unexpected arrival.

He had, however, scarcely settled himself before the empty fire-place after his meal to sip contentedly the cup of strong steaming black coffee she placed at his elbow when the telephone bell in the little hall rattled forth its insistent call.

"Don't stir, dear," his wife said, rising. "It's probably a call for me. I'm expecting Diana Henderson to ring me up."

She came back in a couple of minutes.

"Sorry, old thing," she announced. "It was for you."

Gilmartin jumped for his shoes without a word.

"It is a message from the Yard," she continued, "Relayed from St. Mary's Hospital."

"Yes?" the detective questioned, looking up from the knot he was tying.

"It appears," his wife went on, "that they've just brought in an accident case—a man seriously injured—who is calling out for you by name."

"Who the dickens can that be?" Gilmartin asked aloud. "I wonder——"

Without a moment's pause he picked up his hat and stick, stuffed his pipe and tobacco pouch into his pocket, kissed his wife a quick but affectionate good-night and hurried out.

In half an hour he was at Paddington and asking the hospital superintendent for particulars.

"We cannot identify him," that official told him. "Even the laundry marks have been carefully cut from his linen, and the tailor's tag from his breast pocket, not a paper was to be found in his pockets. The only hope is that you may know him, for he keeps on calling out 'Inspector Gilmartin! Inspector Gilmartin, Scotland Yard!'"

"But," the detective asked, "cannot he tell you his name?"

"He can tell us nothing," the superintendent replied, "He has concussion of the brain and I am very much afraid that it will be a long time before he can talk coherently."

"Suppose you tell me all about how he came here," Gilmartin suggested somewhat impatiently.

"In the usual way," the official answered. "He was brought here by the borough ambulance. It seems to be a case of the usual callous motorist who knocks a man down and clears off without any attempt to help, but——"

"But," Gilmartin interrupted, "Stops to remove all marks of his victim's identity. Funny!"

" Yes," the official replied slowly, " That had not occurred to me, I must say. Perhaps he thr——"

" What's the use of theorising, sir ? " the detective broke in testily, " I'll do that part of it. Would you kindly give me what particulars you know of that accident. It may be important."

" Well ! " the superintendent replied, raising his eyebrows in polite deprecation of this hustling, " It seems that a man on his way home to his flat in Maida Vale saw a large car coming out of one of the quiet streets in that quarter at a terrific pace and narrowly escaped being run down himself. On turning the corner he saw a man lying in the middle of the road and ran forward to find that he had been injured in the head and that he was unconscious. Then the police were called and——"

" I know that part of it," Gilmartin again interrupted. " But it would be more to the point to know the number of that car, the name of the man who found the injured man, the name of the street—but I suppose I'll find all that out at the police station or as much of it as is known. Now, sir, would you mind letting me see the patient. I have an idea that I may be able to identify him."

" The house surgeon is busy with him just now," the hospital superintendent replied, " But come on up and we shall see him as soon as he is out of the operating theatre."

They rose and went through the corridors of the silent building, stopped finally before a glass panelled door through which streamed a blinding glare of electric light. In a few minutes the door opened and a stretcher was wheeled out. The superintendent held up his hand and the attendant stopped. Gilmartin strode forward and looked at the lifeless face of the patient.

" Humph ! " he murmured as he turned away, " I thought so."

" You know him ? " the superintendent asked.

Before the detective had time to answer, a young

white-clad surgeon stepped forward from the room and addressed the official.

"There's something fishy about that case," he announced. "In the first place as far as I know there is no sea sand or sea-weed in Maida Vale, and his clothes were full of both and stained with tar."

"What do you infer from that?" the hospital superintendent asked.

"Nothing. I'm not a detective," the young surgeon replied, "but the police had better be informed, for I can state positively that the patient was *not* knocked down by a motor-car, and that his wounds are the result of no accident. He was deliberately knocked senseless by a blow of something like a life preserver or a sand-bag—and that not within the past hour, but at least twenty-four hours ago."

Gilmartin smiled and pulled out his watch.

"You are quite correct, doctor," he said. "Both as to the method and to the time of the attack. Twenty-four hours and about ten minutes ago this happened."

The surgeon looked inquiringly at the hospital superintendent.

"This is Chief-Inspector Gilmartin of Scotland Yard," the latter announced.

"Oh, yes!" the surgeon exclaimed. "The patient has been calling out for you in his delirium."

Gilmartin nodded.

"He didn't say anything else besides my name?" he asked anxiously.

"Well, yes," the doctor replied. "He did. I suppose there is no harm in telling you. When under the anæsthetic he kept muttering something like: 'Tell Kitty—not her father—complete stranger.' At least that is all I could make of it."

"H'm!" Gilmartin grunted non-committally and turned to the superintendent.

"I will make arrangements," he said, "for a man to stay near his bedside in case he recovers consciousness sufficiently to make a statement. And I don't want

the papers to get any hint that he has been identified."

The superintendent nodded and the surgeon said :

" I can give you no opinion, sir, as to when he will recover consciousness. I have operated on the skull but I don't know what may happen. I think the patient's relatives should be informed."

" I'll see to that," Gilmartin replied and was striding off when the superintendent called after him anxiously :

" But—oh—er—Chief-Inspector, you haven't told us the patient's name. We need it for registration purposes."

" Oh ! " the detective stopped as he answered, " You need it for registration purposes ! Well, his name is James Duncan, and he is a Cambridge undergraduate—or perhaps a graduate. I don't know but I can find out. Good-night ! "

CHAPTER XIX

THE LIST GETTING SMALLER

GILMARTIN was at his desk in Scotland Yard next morning before any of the regular clerical staff had arrived at the office. He found there a telegram which the orderly on duty had placed there in the knowledge that the well-known Chief-inspector had come back from the country. It was from Superintendent Liddell and ran :

" Straker reports Treleaven and barmaid identify photos N685382 and W92417. Liddell."

" Humph ! " the detective grunted and pushed a bell button.

A constable entered and Gilmartin gave him the telegram.

" Find out," he directed simply, " From the photographic section who these people are."

" Yes, sir."

" And tell Detective-Inspector Peters as soon as he comes in that I want to see him at once."

" He has just come, sir," was the reply. " I'll tell him now ! "

" Right ! And tell them to hurry up with that identification."

The Constable saluted and went out. A few minutes later a knock at the door heralded the entrance of Inspector Peters, a big man who looked like a prosperous farmer on a holiday, for though he was a Londoner born and bred he had kept the physique, and to some extent the mentality, of his bucolic Midland forbears. His promotion to the rank of inspector had been a surprise to all his colleagues and to himself, for they knew—and he knew even better than they—

that he was not a brilliant detective and that he feared responsibility. As courageous as a lion, he was also as patient and painstaking as a beaver in probing the intricacies of a case under the directions of a superior officer. It was because of these qualities, and the absolute reliability of the man, that Gilmartin had almost made a personal matter of the promotion he had recommended.

"Good morning, Peters," Gilmartin greeted him, "I've a nice little case here that I've got to hand over to you."

"Good morning, sir," Peters replied punctiliously, for he always "sirred" Gilmartin. "Not that disappearance case in Cornwall, that they had in yesterday's 'Planet?'"

"The very one!" Gilmartin confirmed with a twinkle.

"Good Lord!" Peters exclaimed, "I'll never be able to make anything of that. Can't you give it to somebody else?"

"Oh, come now!" the Irishman rallied him, "Don't try to make yourself out such an ass. Besides, "Cocky" has ordered me to hand it over to you."

"He would!" Peters moaned dolefully, "Trust the 'Cockroach' to let me in for something I don't like. He doesn't love me, the old 'Beetle.'"

"Cocky," "Cockroach" and "Beetle" were some of the nicknames of Assistant Commissioner Roche.

"Nonsense!" Gilmartin laughed. "And don't talk disrespectfully of your superior officers, or they certainly won't love you. Besides, for all you may know, the case might be as simple as A.B.C. What do you know of it beyond what the 'Planet' says?"

"Nothing, but the paper says that it has the news from you."

"So it had," Gilmartin replied, "But did you ever know me tell the Press *all* I knew till the case is finished —or even then?"

Peters brightened up.

"Then you can tell me a lot more?" he asked more hopefully.

"Of course! What do you think, man?" the Irishman retorted. "Is there anything in to-day's papers by the way?"

"Not a great deal," Peters replied, "That is to say, there is a lot of stuff, such as photos of The Mouls House and descriptions, but no news."

"I see," Gilmartin said with a smile. "Well, light your pipe and I'll tell you all I've found out and something of what I suspect."

As the Irishman unfolded his tale, Peters made conscientious notes of the different points. In the middle of the story the constable who had come in earlier entered again with a small sheaf of papers, which he placed on the table in silence. Gilmartin nodded his thanks to the man and continued his narrative without looking at the papers.

"Humph!" said Peters when he had made a note of the final point. "It seems to me that there's going to be a lot of work in this. I've got to find the whereabouts of—let's see—Amos Tretheway or his body or some identifiable part of it; the man who attacked him in his room, who may or may not be Charles Aylward; the two johnnies who doped the constable; the Padstow girl; the man she's gone off with; the lads that knocked out and carried off that poor young devil over in St. Mary's Hospital, and—and I don't know who else. The worst of it is that some of them haven't even been identified. A tall order, sir."

"Very!" Gilmartin replied dryly. "There is also a boat to be found, and her crew, and the men who pushed the two-seater over the cliff; but some of these things will be looked into down there on the spot and you won't have to bother with them."

"Yes," Peters commented. "But, if you ask me, sir, the fellows who doped the constable, and young Duncan's kidnappers and the men who pushed the car over the cliff are the same."

"H'm." Gilmartin grunted. "Perhaps. That would make things easier, I daresay; but I wonder."

"I'm blowed if I know where to begin," Peters wailed, "You say that some of these blokes are here in Town now?"

"Yes," the Irishman nodded. "How else could Duncan have been dropped on the road in Maida Vale?"

"That's true, but from what you say, I think you believed them to be in London before you knew that."

"No, that's not quite what I thought," Gilmartin replied, reaching out for the papers the constable had left on the desk, "I thought some of them had their headquarters in London, and, if I am not mistaken, here are the photos of the two who doped Constable Treleaven."

He turned over the papers and picked up two numbered cards.

"Humph!" he exclaimed. "I thought so."

He handed the cards to Peters, who glanced at them and rose to his feet.

"You don't say!" he almost shouted, "Hooky the Chink and Aussie Albert! I'll have these two by to-night! What the dickens were these two doing down in Cornwall?"

"Doping a constable of the Cornwall County Police!" Gilmartin replied.

"Yes, but what for?"

"If we knew the exact reason for that, Peters," the Irishman said with a smile, "We'd solve the whole mystery without leaving this room. But I'm not particularly keen on having these two roped in just yet. I think it would be better to make inquiries as to what they've been doing since—say—last Thursday, and at the same time have them "tailed" so as to find out what they are doing now, that is to say, if they are in Town. But it's your case now, so you can do as you like."

"Now look here, sir," the other said earnestly, "You know very well that I'll take your advice as I've always

done, and what's more, I'll come back to you for more as the case goes on. You owe it to me, you know, for having shoved me up to an inspectorship."

"All right, old man," Gilmartin laughed. "I'll give you what help I can, though that's a funny way of looking at it."

"I don't believe I'll ever make good as an inspector." Peters reflected dolorously, "I'm no good at planning things though, if I do say it, I'm all right at doing them."

"Don't worry, Peters," the Irishman consoled him, "Between us we'll manage somehow, but you'll have to develop a bigger bump of self-confidence."

"Oh, I know my limits," Peters replied, "And to tell you the truth I'd rather be a sergeant."

"But Mrs. Peters wouldn't hear of it, eh?" Gilmartin added maliciously.

"That's about the size of it." Peters laughed somewhat shame-facedly.

"Well," his superior officer encouraged him, "It is a great thing to know one's own limitations."

Peters changed the subject.

"I wonder how that young fellow at the hospital is getting on?" he asked.

Gilmartin reached out for the telephone.

"I arranged for a man from the local division to stay at his bedside, and report when he is able to speak," he said, "but I'll ring up and ask."

In a few minutes he was speaking to the superintendent of St. Mary's Hospital. Duncan was still unconscious, and likely to remain so for several days. It was possible that a further operation might be necessary. Gilmartin repeated the information to Peters.

"I wired to Straker—the Wadebridge inspector—last night," he added, "and asked him to inform the young lady about Duncan. She'll probably come up to Town if I know anything about her."

"H'm!" Peters reflected. "It's a funny family!"

He did not explain.

"I wonder if Tucker has come yet?" Gilmartin said aloud, "I asked him to decode a couple of——"

"Oh! Didn't you know?" Peters interrupted; "Poor old Tucker is very ill. Pneumonia!"

"Hang!" the Irishman exclaimed with feeling—none of which was wasted on the unfortunate cipher expert, "and I addressed my letter to him personally. I suppose it is still lying about somewhere. That's what comes of not doing things in the proper manner. Let's go to the cipher section and pick out my letter. I hope there is somebody there who can do Tucker's work."

"Oh, yes," Peters replied. "There's that young Cambridge fellow, Vincent. He's very good, I hear. I wonder why he joined the police?"

"Come on, then." Gilmartin rose.

As they reached the door, however, a messenger met them and informed them that Assistant Commissioner Roche required their presence in his room.

"Good Lord!" Gilmartin exclaimed. "Is it ten o'clock?"

They threaded their way through the narrow corridors towards the Assistant Commissioner's room. As they reached a dark turning in the stairs, a burly plain-clothes man flattened himself against the wall to allow them to pass.

"You're too big for Scotland Yard, lad." Gilmartin said playfully as he squeezed past. "And so am I for that matter. Humph!"

"Oh, it's you, sir," the man replied, "I was just bringing a telegram for you."

The Irishman took the orange envelope from the man and hurried up the stairs for light by which to read it. Having run his eyes over it, he handed the tinted paper to Peters.

"Your list is getting smaller every hour," he said.

Peters read:

"Gilmartin, Scotland Yard, London.

"Aylward found seriously injured; making no announcement to press. Writing fully—Straker."

"That fellow Straker's nobody's fool," was Peter's only comment as he followed Gilmartin to the Assistant Commissioner's room.

CHAPTER XX

A MESSAGE DECODED

THE interview with the Assistant Commissioner was short. On learning that Peters had already been put in possession of all the necessary data, that worthy was directed somewhat peremptorily to " get on with it."

" And now, Gilmartin," the chief said, settling himself back in his chair, when Peters had left the room, " As I told you yesterday evening I'm putting you on to this dope business. You've seen the papers lately, I suppose. The penny press is after our skins, my boy, as well as one or two of the muck-raking weeklies."

" Why pay any attention to them, sir ? " Gilmartin interpolated, " It's only a stunt during the silly season."

" That may be," Roche replied hotly. " But stunt or no stunt, they're right this time. There's too damn much of this dope peddling going on. They are absolutely and entirely right when they say that it's not a bit of use pulling in the twopenny-halfpenny creatures, who have a couple of ounces of adulterated cocaine or heroin in their possession, for sale to addicts, when all the time the importers of the stuff—the heads—the brains of the business, are getting off scot-free. That's why, Gilmartin, my boy, that's why I am paying attention to them."

" So," Gilmartin remarked in a casual tone, " I'm to lay my hands on the heads of the business ? "

" Precisely," the Assistant Commissioner replied. " Precisely. From this moment you are in charge of the drive, and it's got to be made without any fuss—

quietly and secretly, and then—at the end a spectacular finish ! "

" Why the theatricals ? " was Gilmartin's amused question.

The Assistant Commissioner smiled.

" M'yes," he replied. " It is not like me, is it now ? No, but orders is orders, Gilmartin. The Home Secretary wants it, and that's that ! He says it's to put the fear of God and the police into the criminals, but between you and me and the wall it's to impress the public and get a good press."

" H'm ! " the detective added. " He wants a pat on the back after the whipping ! "

" Something like that ! " his chief replied, and drew a jacketed file from his drawer. " Here's all we've got on the business up to the present. ' John Citizen '—you know, that Covent garden rag—say that they will put their ' dossiers ' at our disposal if we ask for them."

" I'll look through these first," Gilmartin answered. " I don't want to give ' John Citizen ' a boost, and I shall only go to them if I have to."

" Right ! " the Assistant Commissioner approved. " Then that's all."

" Not quite, sir," the detective demurred. " There's the question of men. How many can I have at a pinch ? "

" At a pinch ! " Roche echoed. " At a pinch, as many as you want, but for routine work I don't know. See Superintendent Dunkerley about that."

" Very good, sir," Gilmartin said, rising. " I may not need any, but I just wanted to know. Good morning."

" Good-morning, Gilmartin ! " the Assistant Commissioner replied, and in a less official tone : " And good luck ! I hope to goodness you'll make good on this."

" I'll do my best, sir."

" Good enough ! Har-r-rumph ! "

In his room Gilmartin went through the papers given him by his chief. His notebook and pencil were ready within reach of his hand, but he made no use of either. As he read on his lips pursed, and every now and then a long " whew ! " issued from them. Absentmindedly he filled his pipe and held several successive matches to the bowl, but without drawing, and only threw them away when they burned his fingers. Finally, however, he rose and began to pace the room, but now he had the tobacco alight and was puffing away like a factory chimney. The little room was already enveloped in a haze, in spite of the open window, before he returned to his chair.

" By Jove ! " he exclaimed aloud. " It's funny ! Some people would say that it was a coincidence too good to be true."

Suddenly he pushed the bell button.

" Find out," he said to the messenger who replied, " if Detective-Inspector Peters is in the building, and tell him I'd like to see him."

" He's just gone out, sir," the man announced, ' with Sergeant Cullen and another man."

" Then leave word for him I want to see him as soon as he comes in," Gilmartin directed. " I shall not be here. He'll find me at home."

" Very good, sir ! "

" And also," the detective continued, " have all letters, telegrams or other messages, sent or phoned to me at home."

" Yes, sir."

" H'm ! " Gilmartin said to himself when the man had gone. " Cocky would be furious if he knew what I am going to do now."

He locked up some papers in his desk, took his hat and stick, and strode out of the room towards the exit stairs. On his way down the corridor he stopped to knock at a door. On entering the room behind it he found there two men busy at their desks, while the third desk in the room was empty.

"Hello!" he said. "So Tucker's ill?"

"Yes, sir," the younger of the men, whose paper in front of him was covered with what looked like algebraic operations, replied. "But we are working on those things you sent from Cornwall. Inspector Peters picked them out from Tucker's correspondence and gave them to me."

"Will it take long?" Gilmartin asked.

"It's difficult to say, sir, but I don't think so," the young man answered. "If we don't work them out one way we'll find them in another."

"How?"

"You see, sir, I've found out from the print and the wording of that cutting you sent that the key is from the *Weekly Monitor*, and Jenkins over there is going through their racing codes while I am trying to work them out. It's a sort of a race between us."

The young official smiled, whilst the other in his corner paid no attention.

"Somebody will be sold if that *Weekly Monitor* code is not the sort of thing that is used in these messages after all," Gilmartin reminded them.

"Oh, I think that will be all right, sir."

"Good!" Gilmartin approved. "Well, I won't interrupt you any further. If you puzzle these messages out before Inspector Peters comes back would you mind phoning them to me at my house?"

"Certainly, sir, I'll phone them to you as soon as I get them."

"Right! Good-morning."

"Good-morning, sir!"

In an hour Gilmartin was at home, clad in an old sports jacket, his slippers on his feet, smoking before an open window. The sound of voices somewhere outside the room and the faint rattle of crockery were evidence that his wife and the daily maid were busy with preparations for an early lunch. During that meal, when it was before him, the detective

was somewhat silent and Mrs. Gilmartin made no attempt to lure him into conversation, for she knew what the silence meant. Later, however, in their sitting-room, when she had placed the coffee-tray within easy reach of his hand, she looked at him for a moment and then came behind him. Rumpling his curly black hair, she said :

" Come on now, drink your coffee, light your pipe and tell me all about it."

Gilmartin laughed and downed a cup of the strong bitter coffee he loved, while his wife took a chair opposite him.

" I've just handed a case over to Peters," he announced.

" What ! The one you were on down in Cornwall ? "

The detective nodded.

" Oh, poor Peters ! " his wife laughed. " I should think he is the one who should worry—not you."

" But I've just been given another."

" Well ? What about it ? A nasty one ? "

" Nasty enough," was Gilmartin's reply. " But that is not the point. Now listen ! I'll give you an outline of both cases, and then hear what you have to say of them."

She heard him to the end without interruption. There was no need to interrupt, for Gilmartin was a master of clarity in his summary of a case.

" H'm ! " his wife said when he had finished. " It certainly is a curious coincidence that the Australian should be one of the men who drugged that Cornish constable and be at the same time one of the men suspected of running this ' dope ring ' as you call it."

" It's more than a coincidence, my dear," Gilmartin affirmed.

" Now ! Now ! " Mrs. Gilmartin held up her hand playfully. " I thought only women jumped to conclusions like that. On what grounds is this man suspected of trafficking in drugs ? "

'On very thin evidence, I admit," her husband replied. "But taken in conjunction with this other thing down in Cornwall, I'm sure there's——"

"You're sure of nothing at all, Larry," Mrs. Gilmartin interrupted. "You are just theorising—a thing you always say a detective shouldn't do—though there I don't agree with you. Of course you may have the right theory but then, I wouldn't bank on it."

"Then what is your own opinion?" the detective asked smiling.

"Before I answer that question," she replied, "I should like to know more about how that young man Aylward was injured."

"We shall probably know that this evening. That Cornish inspector said he was writing."

"Another thing," his wife continued, "what part do you assign in the drug business to the old man—Tretheway?"

"M-m!" Gilmartin hesitated. "A fairly active part, I should say."

"And there was a quarrel between him and his pals, I suppose?" Mrs. Gilmartin went on.

"Something like that."

"But you have no good reason for that suspicion?"

"None, except that the old boy was a bad egg."

"Poor! Very poor, Larry boy! I'm ashamed of you," his wife reproached him with a smile as she poured him out another cup of coffee. "And what about the man with the pointed beard the superintendent man saw?"

"There are lots of men with pointed beards," the detective replied. "In any case, it is almost certainly a member of the gang. I don't think it was Aylward."

"Perhaps not," Mrs. Gilmartin pointed out. "But you must remember that the best of women are capable of telling awful whoppers. Those two good women may be lying about the hour of Aylward's departure

in order to shield that young man. If I were in their place I'm sure I wouldn't be very particular what lies I would tell in the same circumstances."

"But then what motive would——"

The telephone bell rang and Gilmartin jumped up. His wife heard him reply:

"Yes. Gilmartin speaking! Good! Wait a minute till I get a pencil!"

She ran over and gave him a pencil from the table.

"What?" her husband went on, "you have only deciphered one of them? Why? Oh, I see! It's a different key for the other. Well, let's have the one you've solved."

As he wrote Gilmartin repeated the words:

"Expect—consignment—three—no—one—five—no—two—Friday—midnight."

Having written the detective looked puzzled.

"What on earth does it mean?" he asked the telephone receiver. "I can only understand the first two and the last two words. Are you sure it's correct? You are? What? Oh! I see! Expect consignment three of numbers fifteen and two—whatever they are— on Friday midnight! Yes, that sounds likely, though it's still not very clear. That's all right! Thanks! I hope you'll get the other one soon."

Gilmartin turned to his wife as he hung up the receiver.

"Did you hear that?" he asked.

"Yes," Mrs. Gilmartin replied. "But I couldn't make head nor tail of it."

"It means, my dear," the detective announced gleefully, "that I am right! This Tretheway case and the dope case are one and the same. Solve one and you solve the other. This is a message I found in the old man's car."

"Humph!" was his wife's unladylike comment.

"Humph, indeed!" Gilmartin replied equably.

"But I'll bet my boots that numbers fifteen and two are code words for drugs—cocaine, opium, heroin, or what not!"

"Humph again!" Mrs. Gilmartin retorted. "That's all guess-work, though you may be right for all that!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE "TAILING" OF AUSSIE

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ROCHE might indeed have been somewhat displeased had he seen how his subordinate was employing his time after Mrs. Gilmartin had left him to his own devices. The detective sat looking into space and puffing at his pipe until it seemed that its noisy gurgle must surely rouse him. Finally he did rise from his seat, but it was only to search among the litter on his writing-table for a pipe-cleaner. Then he strode over to a well-filled bookcase, and after a few minutes' hesitation selected a little blue-bound book which bore the rather formidable title of "Thesmophoriazusae." Having filled and relighted the rank old pipe he sank again into the easy-chair, and from that moment forgot in his enjoyment of his beloved Aristophanes all that pertained to crime and its detection.

Once or twice Mrs. Gilmartin peeped in, but seeing his contented absorption left him alone until she considered that it was time for his cup of afternoon tea—a beverage which, like his coffee, he drank strong and black. She had scarcely set down the tray when a ring came at the front door bell.

"If that's somebody for you," she said at once, "he can just wait until you have finished your tea."

"M'm!" mumbled Gilmartin without looking up from his book, "'Sonly Peters, I expect!"

"Then I'll go and get another cup," Mrs. Gilmartin decided.

Meanwhile, the servant having opened the door, Peters—for it was he—came in unannounced, meeting

Mrs. Gilmartin at the door and shaking hands with her silently. He advanced further into the room and sat down without a word. Gilmartin gave no sign that he was aware of his presence and went on reading. Even his wife could never decide to her satisfaction whether this mannerism of his was only a pose or whether he was really unconscious to his surroundings. Peters, however, accepted it as he accepted everything else on the part of Gilmartin as the most natural thing in the world. Had Mrs. Gilmartin asked him what he thought about it he would probably have hesitated and then answered that so far as he himself was concerned it only meant that his friend and superior officer wanted to show that he refused to talk "shop." He would possibly have been right.

Mrs. Gilmartin re-entered the room with the extra cup and winked at the burly Peters.

"We'll have tea all to ourselves to-day," she informed him.

"Very pleased, I'm sure, Mrs. G.," he replied with the utmost seriousness.

"How is Mrs. Peters?" his hostess then inquired.

"Going strong, Mrs. G. Going strong!" Peter assured her with a twinkle in his kindly, if rather bovine, eyes. "Very managing and bossy as usual."

This was a standing joke between them, for Peters never concealed from these friends that he was entirely under the thumb of his somewhat "temperamental" spouse—a lady who in height scarcely reached his breast pocket.

"You love it, Mr. Peters, now don't you?" Mrs. Gilmartin teased him.

Whether he did or not he had not time to say for Gilmartin suddenly closed his book with a bang and sat up.

"Hello, Peters!" he said, "you ought to read this thing."

This was another time-worn joke which always

brought forth the same reply followed by the same retort.

" It's Greek to me, sir ! "

" And to everybody else, my boy ! "

While they drank the tea no word of " shop " was spoken. When, however, the tray had been taken away, Mrs. Gilmartin sat down between the two men and announced in mock official tones :

" Now, Inspector Peters, it is time you made your report ! "

Peters looked at Gilmartin with a questioning smile.

" Go on," she insisted, " I'm in on this."

Her husband nodded.

" Well," Peters began, " there's very little to report. Up to now we haven't been able to get on to that half-breed Hooky."

" Pity ! " Gilmartin commented laconically.

" Yes," the other agreed, " it is, but we're hanging on to the ' Aussie ' all right. We found him."

" That's good ! "

" I've got a good man ' tailing ' him," Peters continued, " he has been followed from half-past eleven this morning, but we got no forrarder. He went for lunch to a little Italian restaurant off Hammersmith Broadway, lunched alone and then went up to Oxford Street where he wandered about looking into shop windows—mostly at women's dresses."

" Looking for a present for his best girl, eh ? " Mrs. Gilmartin suggested with a laugh.

" That might very well be, Mrs. G.," Peters replied seriously, " for after about an hour's stroll he went into one of the shops in New Bond Street—one of those classy ones with only one silk dress in the window. He didn't stay there more than a few minutes and came out without a parcel. Then he went back home."

" Where does he live ? " Gilmartin asked.

" In fairly decent rooms in Devonshire Road, Chiswick," Peters replied.

" Humph ! That's a new departure for Aussie.

He used to prefer Soho, and when things got too hot for him there he went the other side of Aldgate Pump."

"Yes, we only found him by chance, through a Chiswick sergeant who used to be in the C Division. He says that Aussie seems to be on the straight now."

"Rot!" Gilmartin declared, "Aussie Albert is as crooked as a dog's hind leg. He couldn't go straight if he tried, and he wouldn't try."

"That's what I think," Peters agreed.

"Did you find out what he has been doing since last Thursday?" the Irishman asked.

There was a twinkle in the stout inspector's eye as he replied:

"I was keeping that for the last, sir. On Thursday night after ten o'clock, a big car, driven by a man who looked like a Chinaman, came up to his door and Aussie went off with a small suit-case and a bag of golf clubs."

"Good!" Gilmartin approved, "that's confirmation of what we already know, and that's all to the good. How did you find it out?"

"By talking to the neighbours, in the usual way."

"Fine! And when did he come back?"

"That's not very clear," was the reply in a regretful tone, "He certainly was in Devonshire Road on Sunday evening at closing time."

"What!" Gilmartin exclaimed.

"Yes, sir. Police evidence! A constable saw him coming out of 'The Ace of Diamonds'—a pub down there."

"Hang!" the Irishman spat out disgustedly.

"An illusion—or is it a delusion?—gone west!" his wife laughed.

"Yes," Gilmartin admitted, "I would have put any money on his having been one of the lads who kidnapped young Duncan. By the way, how is he?"

"Not yet conscious," Peters replied, "but the doctors are hopeful. The young lady has just got in to London, sir."

"Who? Miss Tretheway?" Mrs. Gilmartin asked, "Where is she?"

"Last I heard, Mrs. G., was that she went straight to the hospital. I don't know whether she has a room yet."

"Oh, Larry!" she appealed to her husband. "The poor thing! Don't you think I'd better go and see her? We could put her in the spare room. You can't have her in a hotel all by herself!"

Gilmartin laughed.

"Have it your own way, my dear," he said, "but believe me, that young lady knows how to take care of herself."

"I think it's a very good idea, Mrs. G.," Peters declared, "you might be able to find out whether she was lying about the night of the attack on the old man."

"Well!" she exclaimed indignantly, "you detectives are the absolute limit! I shall do nothing of the kind you—you pair of bloodhounds!"

Gilmartin was smiling as she rose angrily and left he room.

"You put your foot in it there, old man," he said to his astounded colleague, "she really hates this job of mine, and to suggest that she should help by pumping a guest simply puts the tin hat on it."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the bewildered Peters, "I never thought—I didn't know—but she often makes some very good suggestions about your cases—you've told me so, often."

"True," his friend agreed, "but she considers that entirely different. However, don't worry. She'll not hold it against you."

"Lord! I wouldn't offend her for the world," was the contrite reply.

"That's all right!" Gilmartin said soothingly. "Hello! She's gone—off to the hospital, I suppose."

They heard the outer door open and shut and then silence.

The two detectives then entered into a discussion of the Tretheway case until a knock drove Gilmartin to the door.

"Ah!" he said as he took from a Scotland Yard messenger a letter with the Wadebridge postmark, "I was expecting this."

He read the foolscap sheets through without a word and then handed them in silence one by one to his colleague. While the latter read the final page Gilmartin with a frown on his face stared out of the window.

"Humph!" said Peters finally, "so the women *were* lying after all!"

"I wonder!" Gilmartin replied, "I wonder!"

"Not a doubt of it to my mind!" his friend affirmed uncompromisingly.

CHAPTER XXII

INSPECTOR STRAKER REPORTS

"LET me see that again," Gilmartin said suddenly, holding out his hand.

Peters gave him the sheets and the Irishman began to read aloud, slurring over the parts which seemed to him irrelevant, but pronouncing distinctly and drawing the other man's attention to the more significant parts.

"Now listen carefully to this, Peters," he said when he had perused about half a page.

Peters placed his large hands on his knees and took up a listening attitude, his head slightly on one side.

"'As I wired to you,'" Gilmartin read, "we found Charles Aylward seriously injured. General Penhaligon, a Justice of the Peace who lives at Trevoneglaze House which you may have noticed half-way between St. Minfred and Wadebridge, called on me and made a statement as a result of which I visited his residence and interviewed his daughter Elizabeth. The following is the gist of what I elicited from her. On the night of Friday to Saturday—some time after midnight, more definitely she cannot specify—she was reading in bed when she was alarmed by a loud crash which seemed to come from the direction of the lodge at the end of the carriage drive. She opened her window and called out an inquiry as to what had happened, but received no reply. A moment later she saw lights appear within the lodge and heard the voices of the lodgekeeper and his wife who had come out to their front door. Miss Penhaligon then dressed summarily and called the butler, James Martyn, with whom

she went down to the lodge. There they found the lodge-keeper and his wife bending over what seemed to be the body of a man. By the light of the butler's lantern she recognised the man as Charles Aylward, with whom she was well acquainted. Nearby were the ruins of a two-seater car and one of the halves of the entrance gate to the drive hung broken on one hinge. I may remark here that I had noticed the broken gate on Saturday, when on my way to Polreath, but thought nothing of it. The men carried Aylward up to the House and the lodgekeeper was sent immediately to Port Isaac for Dr. Trefusis who is the Penhaligons' family doctor. In the meantime Aylward, it seems, regained consciousness for some minutes and evidently heard Miss Penhaligon say something to a servant about informing the Tretheways of what had happened, for he became very agitated and begged her " in a wild fashion " not to let them know anything, and added something about them having " troubles enough of their own." After this he again lost consciousness. The doctor arrived soon afterwards and diagnosed a fracture of the tibia—the shin bone, a broken arm and some injuries to the head, how serious he did not say then. He advised the young lady to send for her father who was staying for a few days in Exeter. She telegraphed to him on Saturday, but owing to the absence of Sunday trains the General only arrived on Monday morning. On his way he had bought a London paper and seen an account of the attack on Amos Tretheway and his disappearance, according to which it seemed to him that Aylward was suspected of having murdered his uncle. As a Justice of the Peace he considered it his duty, therefore, to inform me of the presence of Aylward in his house and the circumstances which led to it. He expresses his conviction that——'

" Well, that's not important," Gilmartin interrupted himself. " Let us skip that and come to—yes, here we are—' I interrogated the lodgekeeper and

the butler. They confirmed Miss Penhaligon's statement, but both agree that the accident happened after 1 a.m. The butler says it was not earlier than half-past one. This to my mind is significant, for that would leave just about enough time for Aylward to drive from The Mouls House after attacking Tretheway at ten minutes past one. What I do not understand is how the accident happened, unless Aylward was travelling without lights, for in order to hit the gates he had to turn right round to the left off the main road. The absence of lights would make it just possible for that to take place. From the car itself no information is available, for it is a total wreck. I am, however, having it examined by an expert and am keeping it under lock and key in a shed to which it had been moved at once by General Penhaligon's servants. I have made no communication to the——'

"Well, that's all about that." Gilmartin stopped and looked up at Peters. "Now, what do you think?"

"W-well," Peters hesitated, "it's one of two things. Either Mrs. Tretheway and her daughter are lying about the time Aylward left the house, or it wasn't an accident at all."

"What do you mean—wasn't an accident at all?"

"Suppose it was like this," the big inspector said solemnly. "Suppose Aylward had been stunned beforehand and put in the car and then driven out to those gates. Suppose then the driver slowed down and got out and then put the car into high gear and sent her full speed ahead into the gates. Eh?"

Gilmartin laughed.

"Peters!" he said accusingly, "you've been reading detective stories."

"Yes," Peters admitted, "I read nothing else, and you know as well as I do that in our job there's things happen in everyday life if an author put them in his books he'd be laughed at."

"M'yes. That's true. But I don't know that it

fits the case here. That's a regular detective story dodge."

Peters shook his head sceptically.

"As if criminals couldn't get a wrinkle or two from detective stories themselves," he grunted.

"Pity the doctor wouldn't let Straker question Aylward himself!" he added after a minute.

"Yes," Gilmartin agreed, "it is, but it can't be helped."

"The old general doesn't seem to like Amos Tretheway," he added, "that must have been the old chap I saw at Wadebridge Station. Of course it is, I heard him call the girl Betty. Funny! I felt at the time that they had something to do with the case. That's all to the good. It's another person found. As a J.P. the old fellow can't afford to obstruct the police by getting Aylward away, even if he wished to do so."

"You never know," Peters observed sapiently. "These country squires seem to be able to twist the local police about their fingers. But there's a thing in that letter I didn't understand—that bit at the end about the Belgian chauffeur. You never told me about him."

"No," Gilmartin replied, "to tell you the truth, I forgot all about him. He is a fellow who used to drive Tretheway's car and was dismissed, it appears, for insolence. He wore a pointed beard like Aylward's."

"Let's hear that bit again," Peters asked.

Gilmartin ran his eyes over the last sheet of Straker's voluminous report.

"M'yes, here we are," he began. "'As to the Belgian chauffeur, Emile Deckers, I have a report from the Worcestershire police. He is now in the employ of a Mr. John Rugeley of Priory Manor, near Evesham. The Evesham police give him a good character. No information is yet available as to his movements on the night of Friday to Saturday. On Saturday after-

noon he drove his employer to Dover and crossed with him and the car—whose number plate is NP386C —to Boulogne, whence it is believed he will drive to Tours. Mr. Rugeley, it seems, intends making a tour of the Château country—I do not know where that is as I can find it in no atlas—and then expects to travel *via* Limoges, Toulouse, Marseilles, Toulon and Nice to Italy. At least that is what the other servants say with regard to the forwarding of letters. I attach herewith the list of dates as given to the housekeeper in case they may be useful.

" ' An interesting item of information the Evesham police give is that Deckers shaved off his moustache and beard on Saturday before leaving for the Continent with his master. He explained this to the other servants by saying that when trimming his beard his hand slipped and he took off too much hair from one side. He decided then to take it all off. A yard boy confirms this, stating that he was sent down by Deckers to Evesham to buy a razor about 11 a.m. and that he noticed the man's beard to be irregular. He also affirms that the chauffeur cuffed him for laughing at him.' "

" It's quite a likely story," Peters remarked with a nod, " I once did the same thing with my moustache."

" Oh, it's very possible indeed," Gilmartin agreed, " but it is a funny coincidence that it should happen just then."

" There are two things that hit one in the face," Peters pointed out shrewdly, " the first is this : if that chauffeur was at The Mouls House at one o'clock in the morning he would have to travel nearly all day to get there from Evesham and all night to get back, and in a fast car, too. The next thing is that if he crossed to Dover on Saturday he couldn't be at Polreath on Sunday evening. Therefore the man with the pointed beard that Miss Tretheway saw was not Deckers and it is very unlikely that the man that Cornish superintendent saw was Deckers."

"And if Aylward was lying injured at General What's-his-name's, the man that Miss Tretheway saw on Sunday was certainly not Aylward," Gilmartin added.

"Then who the dickens was he?" Peters asked.

"It's not so bad," Gilmartin reminded him, "to know who he wasn't. In any case we'll have that Belgian fellow looked up by the French police, just to be on the safe side. But we were talking of coincidences a minute ago. How would it strike you if I told you that the Tretheway case which I handed over to you and the dope case which I have taken on were one and the same?"

"I'd say it was too good to be true," Peters replied calmly.

"Well, it's a fact!"

"No, you're pulling my leg!"

Gilmartin shook his head.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" Peters exclaimed. "You're sure? Tell me how you make that out! By Jove! then we can work together, you doing the planning and me the donkey work."

"Oh, there's donkey work for a dozen, old man," the Irishman informed him. "Now, listen here!"

And he began the story he had gathered from the file given him that morning by Assistant Commissioner Roche. Peters listened attentively. His face did not show whether he was convinced or not, until the production of the message which had been deciphered by the young man at Scotland Yard, and which he had not yet had an opportunity of seeing. Then his face brightened up.

"That's fine!" he exclaimed. "By Golly, it's great! And you're right! You're right!"

Then the telephone bell rang.

"I don't know whether that instrument is a blessing or a curse," Gilmartin said as he rose to answer.

He came back in a couple of minutes, smiling.

"Yes, Peters, I'm right!" he exclaimed. "Hear

this : the second message—the one I found in Tretheway's pocket-book—is deciphered and this is what it says : ' Yard increased activity. Forty-two raided Closing sixty-four *pro tem* Send no more stocks till requested Suspect leakage info. Investigating.' Now, what do you think of that ? "

"H'm ! Very curious ! " Peters replied. " Funny, isn't it ? I was in the raid on forty-two—that's 42, Berners Crescent, a sort of night-club where we found nobody but drug addicts and a lot of booze and dope. H'm ! So the proprietor we arrested was only a subordinate ! Very funny ! "

" Very ! " Gilmartin agreed. " What is sixty-four ? "

" You'll probably find that in your file," Peters replied, " unless we have never had it under observation, but that's not likely or they wouldn't be closing it. Better look up all the suspected dope shops whose number is sixty-four. I'll do it for you if you like."

" M'yes ! " Gilmartin answered. " It won't do any harm to look it up, but I don't think we'll learn much that way. These people seem to have a good intelligence service."

Suddenly the face of Peters clouded.

" But, I say," he said, " if this affair is as you think it is, how do you account for young Aylward ? How does he come into it ? "

" I don't know," Gilmartin admitted, " but suppose he had somehow found out old Tretheway's part in this dope business, don't you think he'd go for the old reprobate and in his anger perhaps even kill him ? "

" But what about disposing of the body ? " Peters objected. " He couldn't do it in the time."

" Difficult ! " the Irishman agreed. " But he had plenty of time if—suppose Superintendent Liddell is mistaken about the hour instead of the women lying about it. Eh ? "

"By gosh, sir," Peters exclaimed, "I believe you're right there! That point was never properly gone into, was it?"

"No," Gilmartin laughed. "But I can't be right in every guess, Peters. There's too much guess-work in this as a matter of fact."

CHAPTER XXIII

FLOATING IN WI' THE TIDE

WHEN Mrs. Gilmartin came back to her Ealing home bringing with her Miss Tretheway, the two women were already on terms of affectionate intimacy and the detective was secretly and a little cynically amused to hear them calling each other Ethel and Kitty respectively, as if they had known each other all their lives. Peters had already gone to his own home for supper in preparation for some night work which was before him. Kitty Tretheway whose smile pierced through her worried expression greeted Gilmartin unaffectedly and thanked him for his hospitality.

"All my friends are out of Town," she said, "and I really didn't like the idea of going to an hotel."

"And don't worry, Kitty," Ethel Gilmartin interposed before her husband could say a word, "I am not going to let him worry you with prying questions while you are here."

"I'll ask one nevertheless," Gilmartin said, "How is Jimmy getting on?"

The girl's face saddened as she replied:

"He is not yet conscious."

"But the hospital superintendent told me," Mrs. Gilmartin added, "that they would pull him through. He has a wonderful constitution and will get better quickly."

"Well," the detective said to Kitty, "that is the only question I am going to ask you. In fact I am not going to give myself the chance of worrying you, for I am taking the first train to-morrow for North Cornwall."

"What? To Polreath?" Kitty asked.

"I suppose I shall finally land up there sometime." Gilmartin replied.

Nevertheless, on the following morning he did not take a ticket for Wadebridge, and it was only at Padstow, the terminus of the line, that he left the train. The weather had turned stormy and he found the picturesque little town agog with excitement at the news that a Norwegian three-master laden with pit-props for Cardiff was in difficulties off Trevose. The well-equipped lifeboat—the *Helen Peele*—had put out to see if she could help, and in spite of the wind and rain half the population and all the visitors to the town were out on the hills watching the efforts she was making.

The detective engaged a room in one of the little quayside hotels whose proprietor was as excited as his fellow-townspeople about the putting out of the lifeboat.

"I hope they'll have better luck with this one," he was saying as he showed Gilmartin his room, "than they had with the last."

"Why? Was there a shipwreck lately?" the Irishman asked.

"Yes, sir—a tanker, laden with oil. She foundered with all hands before they got to her. They're an awkward sort of craft to handle in a heavy sea. That was only a few days ago, too. Last week it was—the night it was raining so bad—now what day was it?"

"Not Friday?" Gilmartin asked.

"Friday it was, sir," the man replied. "That's right! Friday night between eleven and midnight. That's right!"

"Well," the detective said, "I hope this one will be all right. Now let me have a large tankard of bitter and have something yourself."

When the beer was brought Gilmartin drank it thirstily and asked the hotel proprietor a great many questions about the town and its people, all of which

the man—not a native of the place—answered garrulously. It seemed strange to the detective that his host appeared to know very little about and to take very little interest in the events which had taken place at Polreath, and he realised that the Camel Estuary, unbridged as it was, separated Padstow socially and economically from the country north of it as effectively as if it had been the frontier between two rather unfriendly countries. Having satisfied his curiosity on many things Gilmartin went out on to the wet quay and asked the first man he met the way to the police station. There he introduced himself to the solitary constable who sat reading the preceding Sunday's paper.

"Where's your sergeant?" he asked.

"He's gone out to Trevose, sir," the constable answered, "with the inspector."

"What? Is Inspector Straker here?"

"Yes, sir. We always let him know if the lifeboat puts out and he comes over on his motor-bike."

"I see," Gilmartin nodded. "Well, perhaps you can give me the information I want. Do you know if anything has been done with regard to the girl who disappeared?"

"Minnie Hawke, sir?" the man exclaimed, "Why, yes, sir. She turned up as bold as brass by the midday train from Plymouth yesterday."

"What!" Gilmartin almost shouted. "And I wasn't told? And you haven't roped her in?"

"No, sir. Oh, I see what you mean, sir. You mean about that Polreath business?"

"Yes!" impatiently.

"The sergeant questioned her closely, sir, for about a hower and a half, but she was able to satisfy him that she had a alibi. I wouldn't 'a' believed it, sir, if I hadn't 'a' seen it, but she shook her marriage lines in sergeant's face."

"Her marriage lines?"

"Yes, sir, she went to Plymouth and got married to the commercial traveller—a frightened looking little

bit of a man. He came back with her. And inquiries about him were quite satisfactory, sir. He can prove he was in Plymouth and there's nothing against him."

"I want to see that girl at once." Gilmartin barked peremptorily. "Run off and find her for me. I'll take care of the station while you're away."

The constable looked doubtful, but met Gilmartin's glinting eye and hurried out without waiting to take his helmet. It was a quarter of an hour before he returned panting and dripping.

"Sorry, sir," he apologised, "I had to look for her up on the hill."

Behind him stood a girl and a man. The girl was a plump, dark damsel, coarsely handsome, with big rather stupid-looking eyes and a mop of bobbed hair of raven hue. She was pale and seemed frightened, for the constable had told her of the "great London detective" who had sent for her. The man with her was a rather weedy specimen, as fair as she was dark, so fair, indeed, that only at close quarters in a good light were his eyebrows and little moustache visible. Clad in an imitation "Burberry" of the trench-coat type the collar of which he was turning down as he entered to reveal a high "choker" collar and brilliant tie of red striped with gold, he looked at Gilmartin with something of the truculence one would expect in a frightened mongrel dog at bay.

"Take off your hat, you!" the detective barked at him, "Who are you, anyway?"

"This is Minnie's husband, sir," the constable volunteered.

"Is he? I didn't ask for him. Get out!"

"I 'ave a right to be 'ere," the youth—for he was little more—squeaked rather than spoke.

"Oh, you have, have you?" Gilmartin sneered. "Then stay! I hope you'll like what you hear. Constable, take a pen and paper and write down questions and answers."

This latter order was pure "eyewash" as the local policeman understood from the unprofessional wink with which Gilmartin favoured him.

"Right, sir! Ready!" the constable replied, poising his pen with obvious enjoyment.

"You are Minnie Hawke?" the detective addressed the girl.

"Yes—that is No!" was her flustered reply.

"What do you mean?" barked Gilmartin, though he knew perfectly well what she meant.

"I—I—I'm Minnie Hawke as was, sir," the girl now answered and gathered courage. "I'm now Mrs. Bert Grant—I've got my marriage lines, I have."

"I'm not interested in your marriage lines," the detective said, repressing a smile. He hated to bully a woman, but he thought he knew this type and how to treat it.

"You have lived in Padstow?" he continued.

"Yes, sir, in Crackrattle Street."

"Do any work?"

"Yes, sir."

"What?"

"Saleswoman, sir. I worked for Miss Tremaine."

"Who's Miss Tremaine?"

"Robes and Modes, sir!"

"Very interesting," Gilmartin remarked dryly. "Roabs and Moads! H'm! I see! Do any other work?"

"No, sir!" This with a somewhat defiant air.

"Now be careful, young woman!" the detective warned her with raised forefinger, "be very careful!"

"It's true, sir!"

"It isn't!" Gilmartin contradicted flatly and began impressively to turn over some stray papers which contained nothing of interest to him, lying on the table before him, "I have here information that if your days were employed at Miss What'sername's, your nights were otherwise occupied. Now what about it?"

The girl stood dumb.

"Come on!" the Irishman insisted, "what have you to say to that?"

"Nothing!" This was in a sullen tone.

"Now, don't sulk!" Gilmartin rapped out. "We'll find a way of making you talk if you do."

Still silence!

"Now look here, young lady." Gilmartin leaned over and addressed her in a quiet—almost silky—tone, which, had she known him better, she would have dreaded. "Before you leave this police station you've got to tell me the meaning of those motor rides on the other side of the river with Mr. Amos Tretheway."

The constable at the other desk forgot to write in his interest at the interrogatory.

"'Ere, sir," interposed the woman's newly married husband, "she's satisfied me on that point and that ought to be enough and——"

"She's got to satisfy the Law, young fellow!" shouted Gilmartin and then stopped.

"Yes," he continued in a quieter tone. "And—go on!"

"You shut up, Bert!" Minnie screamed suddenly. "Don't you say another word!"

A tramping of many feet outside was heard and the door of the charge room flew open. Inspector Straker's voluminous figure, clad in streaming oilskins, was framed in its opening.

"Here, Collins!" he called. "Oh, Chief Inspector, it's you! Will you just come out here a minute!"

Gilmartin rose and went out. Through the doorway leading to the station yard two fishermen were carrying on the bottom board of a boat a figure covered with an army blanket.

"Just take a look at that!" said Straker when the men had laid their burden down on the floor of a bicycle shed.

The detective advanced and raised the blanket. He started back for he had uncovered a face so battered

or eaten by fishes—or both—that nothing could be seen of any features. The body lay almost on one side.

"Go on!" Straker said. "Look further!"

An old fisherman lifted the blanket off the body. Gilmartin saw a dark grey tweed suit and——

"My God!" he exclaimed, hardened though he was.

"Tell him, Davy," Straker directed the fisherman who was holding the blanket.

"I'm coxswain of the *Helen Peele*, sir," the man said, "and we was comin' in towin' that there Norwegian when I see this 'ere body floatin' in wi' the tide at mouth o' river. I thinks it's a body from the tanker as foundered las' week and I steers for he. We pulled'n in, sir, and when I see that, then I knowed as it were somethin' more serious like. So when we tied up I sent for inspector, here. You see, sir, with they clothes and *that*, it couldn't be one o' the tanker's crew."

"*That*," was simply that the dead man's legs were bound with rope and his wrists tied behind the back.

Gilmartin shuddered, hardened policeman though he was. Suddenly he felt somebody fall against him and heard a scream behind him.

"Oh! Oh! God! The brutes! It's Mr. Tretheway!"

And Mrs. Bert Grant, who in her curiosity had followed Gilmartin and the constable to the yard, fell in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XXIV

QUESTION AND ANSWER

"HERE!" Gilmartin called out. "Get a doctor, somebody!"

"She'll be all right!" said Inspector Straker stooping over the girl, while her husband looked on helplessly, "it's only a faint."

"Doesn't matter," the Irishman said, "send for a doctor in any case. You'll need one to look at this, if not at her."

"True!" Straker admitted.

Then seeing Bert Grant standing there he asked:

"Who are you? Run away for Dr. Wakefield at once."

"I—I—don't know where he lives," Bert babbled stupidly.

"Then get out o' here!" Straker shouted, "Collins, you get Dr. Wakefield! He's down at the lifeboat station attending to those Norwegians."

The constable went out, and Gilmartin followed him, returning almost immediately with a tin of water, which he threw unceremoniously in Minnie Grant's face. She opened her eyes at once, and as they caught sight of the figure on the board she began to wail.

"That'll do!" Gilmartin said sharply and turned to her husband, who had not obeyed Straker's command but was standing by the door as if bemused. "Here, take her home and keep her there. I haven't finished with either of you yet."

Bert helped his bride to her feet and they stumbled out of the shed, the girl mumbling:

" I shan't say another word—not a word."

Straker and Gilmartin followed them out into the yard.

" I suppose," said the latter, " there's no chance of seeing the local coastguard officer now ? "

" No," Straker replied, " I expect he is busy with this lifeboat business, but he should be free this evening. Why ? Do you want to see him ? "

" Very much. I wonder if you and he could come over to the Caledonian—where I am staying—and dine with me at seven or thereabouts."

" I'll come and I expect Commander Douglas will, too, if it's business. He's very keen."

" It's business—as you call it—all right." Gilmartin assured him.

" Then he'll come. I'll give him the message. He's a good scout and will do anything to help if he is asked."

" I'm glad to hear that," the Irishman said emphatically, " for I want his help. And now, after the doctor has seen that body, I want to go over to Polreath and see Mrs. Tretheway."

" I hope nobody has been officious enough to 'phone about this thing over there," Straker remarked. " One of the fishermen down on the quay seemed to know him. If they have we'll have her over here on our hands, and to tell you the truth I don't want women about just now."

" You'll have to have somebody here at the inquest," Gilmartin reminded him, " to identify the body."

" True ! "

Constable Collins came out through the back door of the police-station, followed by Doctor Wakefield—a young man of alert appearance, who greeted Straker cheerfully.

" What's this I hear ? " he asked, " Old Tretheway's body ? "

He looked inquiringly at Gilmartin, whom the local inspector thereupon introduced.

"Look here, doctor," said Gilmartin, "sorry to hustle you and all that. I know you'll have to make an autopsy, and so on, according to the best approved methods, but there are one or two questions about this body I want cleared up as soon as possible."

"Yes?" the doctor inquired, "What are they?"

"In the first place," Gilmartin replied, "the question of the wounds on the face. Were they inflicted before or after death? Then there are the ropes tied round hands and legs. Oh, by the way, where is that coxswain? He can clear up one point for me."

"He's gone, out I think," Straker answered, "but I'll go in and see."

He came out with the old lifeboatman in less than a minute.

"I want you, sir," the Irishman said to the man, "before the doctor looks at that body, to tell me whether the knots on the ropes round legs and wrists were tied by a sailor or not."

The man nodded and went into the shed, followed by the doctor and the detective. The country inspector stayed where he was, saying that he did not think that they needed him. As a matter of fact he had not the experience of dead bodies which the others had, and felt squeamish.

The lifeboatman, smoking a short clay pipe, bent calmly over the body and examined the leg ropes thoroughly, in the most unconcerned fashion, fingering them and turning the corpse with indifference. Then he looked at the wrists, taking much less time to do so than he had devoted to the legs. He straightened himself up slowly, and puffing vigorously at his cutty, looked from one to the other of the two men before him without saying a word.

"Well?" Gilmartin asked.

"You'm a sharp 'un," the man said calmly.

"That may be," the Irishman replied, "or it may not. I can see as far through a stone wall as the next

fellow, but what about these knots ? I'm asking you as an expert. I'm only a landlubber myself."

The fisherman's eyes twinkled.

" Yes," he said slowly and deliberately, " I understand. A sharp'un, I says. Well, as an expert, I'll tell'ee this. The knots on they legs was tied by a seafarin' man as knowed his job—I'd say he was in sail, not in steam neither. An' that same man nivver tied the 'ands. They was tied by a landlubber as you might say, and badly even for a landsman."

" But how——" the doctor was about to interrupt, but the man went heedlessly on.

" An' what's more," he said, " they hands was tied with a piece o' string no sailor would have any use for. It's only good for tyin' parcels and such-like in shops."

" Would you swear to all that in a court of law ? " Gilmartin asked almost excitedly.

" Sure ! " the fisherman replied without any emotion, " I'd swear to'n anywheres."

" Good ! " the detective exclaimed, " They all know your name here, I expect, so I won't bother you further, but if you're free about seven o'clock just go over to the Caledonian and tell the barman to give you a good drink at my expense."

" Thank'ee, sir, I will," the man agreed with a smile, and went out muttering, " Swear to'n anywheres, I would. Yes ! "

" Now, doctor," Gilmartin said, " it's your turn. Just have a look."

The medical man examined the battered face and then looked at the detective.

" As far as I can see," he said, " this wound on the temple was inflicted before death and perhaps caused it, but I'd have to examine more closely to say with certainty. The other wounds were made after death—by battering against the rocks, probably."

" To tell you the truth," Gilmartin said, " I'm not much interested in the face, though it will have its

importance. For the moment I don't want to draw any inferences from what you say until I know a lot more. I didn't say exactly what I wanted out there in the yard because in these little towns things have a habit of getting to everybody's ears, and there are certain matters I want kept quiet—for good and sufficient reasons. So I want you, doctor, if you don't mind, not to say a word about what you may discover until I tell you to do so."

"I understand. You may depend on me."

Gilmartin then moved the body over on its face and pointed to the dead man's hands. The doctor looked and exclaimed, but the detective stopped him.

"Hush!" he warned, "now look at this!"

"*This*" was merely a piece of seaweed which seemed to have become entangled with the wristcords. The doctor stared at it uncomprehendingly.

"Look more closely," the detective ordered him, at the same time straightening out the slimy bit of vegetation.

"Yes, yes," Dr. Wakefield exclaimed excitedly, "I see! I see! He was tied——"

Remembering the detective's caution he stopped and began to turn up the dead man's cuff. He started and looked at Gilmartin.

"Yes," the latter said with a nod. "I saw that when they brought the body in. That's why I sent for you. It's the only identification mark I could find on the corpse itself."

Turning to the feet, the detective drew a knife from his pocket and choosing a place where there were no knots he deliberately cut the rope away and rolled up the dead man's trousers.

"Have a good look at the legs," he said, pointing to the place which had been encircled by the ropes. "There!"

The doctor did so.

"By George!" he said, "I wish I knew what you seem to know."

" You know all that I know," Gilmartin answered with a smile.

" Well," the doctor replied, " I take leave to doubt it. Now, I suppose I'd better get my colleague Clouston and make an examination, so as to see if this unfortunate man met his death by drowning or by violence. They'll want to know that at the inquest."

" That's it," the Irishman approved. " As soon as you like, but not a word to the—public. Warn your colleague."

They left the shed, and after washing their hands in warm water thoughtfully provided by Straker's orders went their separate ways.

Gilmartin strolled down to the quayside where he had an interview with the Customs officer whom he found in a little office there. Then, hailing the ferry, he crossed the river to Rock. Thence a battered Ford hired at the garage opposite the hotel carried him to The Mouls House.

A maid answered his summons at the front door. To his request to see Mrs. Tretheway the girl half-tearfully replied :

" Oh, sir, missus can't see 'ee. She's heard the news from Padstow. Fred Smale had it at the Post Office by 'phone and told 'er. She's all upset and won't leave 'er room."

" Give me a piece of paper and an envelope like a good girl," Gilmartin said to this, " I'll write her a note and wait for the answer."

The maid led him into the library where he sat down and scribbled a few words.

" Tell your mistress," he directed, giving the note to the girl, " that I only want ' yes ' or ' no ' for an answer."

He waited for the reappearance of the servant, staring thoughtfully out of the window. The maid was absent perhaps a minute.

" Please, sir," she said when she re-entered, " Missus says the answer is ' no ' and asks ' why ? ' "

Gilmartin sat down and wrote another note—a little longer than the preceding one.

"There," he said to the girl, "that's the answer. I'll wait here for you, for I want a few words with you when you come down."

CHAPTER XXV

THE MAID'S STORY

WHEN the maid returned, Gilmartin smiled at her to put her at her ease, for she looked frightened.

"You're the girl I questioned before?" he stated rather than asked.

"Yes, sir," she replied, "and I told 'ee the truth, sir, and didn't say a word to nobody like you said."

"Yes," the detective said gently, "you told me the truth, but not the whole truth."

"Oh, yes, sir, it were the whole truth!"

"Oh, no, sir," Gilmartin mocked her, "it were not the whole truth. You told me that you heard voices from your room on Friday night and I believed you then because I didn't know then that you cannot hear anything that is said in Mr. Tretheway's room from upstairs unless it is shouted. So you see, my girl, that I don't believe you now that I know better. What have you to say to that?"

"I did hear 'em, sir," the girl persisted.

"I'm perfectly sure you did," Gilmartin agreed. "In fact, you must have heard a good deal more than you told me, but you didn't hear them from your room."

"No-no, sir."

"Come now! Come now!" Gilmartin pressed gently. "Out with the whole story! I know why you lied in that little matter, I'm sure. You thought that it didn't make a lot of difference one way or another where you were supposed to have heard from and——"

The girl nodded in agreement.

"Yes," the detective resumed, "but it does make all the difference, you see, because if you say you heard from your room your evidence is useless, for anybody could prove that you couldn't hear from there. Then they'd say that you were inventing the whole thing. See?"

Again a nod.

"But," Gilmartin went on, "you weren't inventing the whole thing. You did hear what you said you heard. But you didn't want anybody to know that you were sp—that you had come down to listen. Isn't that it?"

"Y-yes, sir!"

"Very good, then. Now will you just tell me everything exactly as it happened. I won't say a word to your mistress or anybody unless I have to—and then it won't matter one way or the other. Now sit down there like a good girl and begin."

The maid placed herself gingerly on the edge of a chair and began to twist her apron.

"A pity to spoil your apron like that," the detective said with a smile, "it's a nice apron."

She giggled at this and hung her head. She was a somewhat raw country girl and Gilmartin saw that he would have to help her out by means of a few questions, put in such a way as not to frighten her. It reminded him of how in his youthful days in Ireland he used to approach shy young fillies in the paddock.

"What woke you up?" he asked as a beginning.

"It was a terrible noise, sir," she replied to this, "as if somebody was throwin' tables and chairs about."

"Humph! What time was this?"

"I dunno, sir. I haven't a watch, and cook keeps the alarum clock in her room."

"Pity! And what did you do when you woke up?" Gilmartin asked patiently.

"I listened a bit, sir," the girl said, "then I jumped out o' bed. I was a bit scared and—and—I opened my door a little and I heard a man shouting."

"Did you hear what he was saying?"

"Not clearly, sir, but it was somebody calling master an ole blaggard and master was shoutin': 'Let go, you fool, let go!'"

"Yes," the detective nodded, "that's what you told me before. It's what you saw and heard after that that I want to know. What did you do then?"

"I—I put on a coat over my—I put on a coat and slipped down the stairs."

"Yes?"

"An' master's door was open an' the light was shinin' out on the passage, an' I heard master sayin': 'Shut up, you fool, you'll rouse the whole house!' Then the other man began to talk low and I didn't hear what came next."

"Yes? And then?"

"Then I crept nearer, sir, an' they was whisperin'."

"Did you hear what was said?"

"Only bits here an' there, sir; but, like I said before, I couldn't understand what it was all about."

"Can you remember any of the words?"

The maid thought for a moment.

"Only now and again, sir, the man seemed to get angry and spoke louder, and he'd say: 'I won't have it! I won't have it! I'm done with you!'"

"Yes? Anything else?"

"An'—an'—master said angry-like: 'I don't know what you're talking about.' Then the other man called master a liar and said he had proofs"

"Proofs of what?"

"I don't know, sir. That's what I couldn't understand. Besides, I couldn't hear very well because the rain was beating on the windows. It was only when they talked a bit louder that I could hear."

"H'm! I see!" Gilmartin said, "I wish you'd told me all this before."

The maid was silent and began to follow the designs of the carpet with the toe of her shoe.

"Now think!" the detective went on, "Think for

a moment! See if you can't remember anything more—even bits of phrases that you couldn't understand."

The girl looked up.

"Yes, sir," she said suddenly, "The man said: 'Remember you've got a wife—and a daughter. You don't want them disgraced!' And the master said: 'You're a nice un to come lecturin' me—a man twice your age."

"You're sure of that?" Gilmartin exclaimed.

"Oh, yes, sir!" the maid assured him.

"Anything else?"

The girl was frowning in her effort to remember.

"There was something," she said at last, "about a girl—something like: 'That girl is a dangerous hussy, she's sure to give you away.'"

"Yes?"

"And there was talk about money—and duty, I couldn't understand. Something about three pounds a pound and that being harmless."

"Yes, yes?" Gilmartin said excitedly, "Who said that? Mr. Tretheway?"

"No, sir, the other one, and he was sayin' that he would clear out and have nothin' more to do wi' master, or any of his, if he would carry on a dirty rope business—I couldn't make it out!"

"You're sure it was rope business?" the Irishman asked. "It wasn't *dope* business by any chance?"

"It might 'a' been, sir," the girl replied innocently. "I dunno what that is!"

"A good thing, too!" Gilmartin muttered.

He rose and went over to one of the bookshelves. After a moment's search he picked out a Whitaker's almanac and consulted the index. Then he turned to a certain page and began to run his finger down a column, muttering as he did so:

"Three pounds a pound! Three pounds a pound!"

Suddenly his finger came to rest.

"Three and ninepence an ounce!" he exclaimed. "That's three pounds a pound!"

"Yes, sir!" said the girl wonderingly."

Gilmartin, who had spoken to himself, looked at her and put back the book—

"You're quick at mental arithmetic," he said. "Now, is there anything else?"

"I can't think of anything more," she replied.

"When did you go back to your room?" the detective asked. "What happened?"

"They was whisperin' then, sir, and I couldn't hear anything what they was sayin'," the girl related with more confidence. "Then somebody said: 'Come on!' and the bed began to creak terrible an'—gruntin' like."

"Yes?"

"Then somebody came out of the room, and I ran back to the foot of the stairs when I see his shadow comin'."

"Didn't you look to see who it was?" Gilmartin asked.

"Yes, sir. I—I peeped round the corner an' I see the first one's face."

"The *first* one's? Then there were two?"

"I couldn't see the second, sir, because they turned out the light then."

"But you saw the first one! What was he like?"

"I saw 'un against the light, sir," the girl protested, "Not very clear! Only his moustache and beard!"

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?" Gilmartin said irritably. "However, let it pass! You recognised him, then?"

"I'm not sure, sir, but I thought—I—I wouldn't like to do him any harm—an'—I——"

"You think it was Mr. Aylward? Isn't that it?"

"Yes, sir, but——"

"But what?"

"It wasn't him as was talkin' nasty to the master," she cried, bursting into tears, "An' I'm not goin' to

swear his life away. It was the other as was doin' all the talkin'. Mr. Aylward was always nice to us uns an' I'm not goin'——"

"Oh, for the love o' Mike, shut up!" said Gilmartin, who was always gruff when a woman wept. "You'll swear the truth, that's what you'll do, or we'll deal with you. That'll do, now. I'll question you no more. Run away and dry your eyes, and not a word about this to anybody!"

He picked up his hat and let himself out. As he sat in the tonneau of the noisy Ford on his way back to Rock he was talking to himself.

"Yes," he muttered, "it's quite natural, too. He objected to that girl being trundled about and—etcetera. He didn't mind the old man smuggling saccharine—it's harmless, quoth he, and the duty is three pounds a pound, but he drew the line at dope. Yes, that's what it looks like! Not that it makes things any clearer—not a bit. I must make that Padstow girl talk, though short of smacking her I don't see how I'll be able to do it. We'll have to see what a few days' cell will do to help. H'm! I'm talking as if I were going to give her the third degree."

The ferry from Rock to Padstow was crowded with golfers from St. Enodoc, but that did not hinder the ferryman, who recognised the detective, from making attempts to get him to say what he thought of the discovery of "Ole man Amos's corp," as he disrespectfully called it.

"Nobody liked'n, sir," he said. "But when it comes to tyin' he up wi' ropes, then it was goin' too far!"

Gilmartin, though amused, answered monosyllabically, for he did not like his work to be accompanied by any publicity, and the stares of the golfers, male and female, made him feel thoroughly uncomfortable. He was glad, when the disreputable old craft bumped against Padstow quay, to see Straker at the top of the steps leading to the ferry in company with a clean-shaven, blue-eyed, stout little man who had "Royal

Navy" written all over him. Gilmartin ran up, and was introduced forthwith to Commander Douglas of the Coastguard Service.

"The Commander has a bit of news for you," Straker then announced. "He thinks he has located that sailing vessel you spoke of."

Gilmartin looked at the Coastguard officer, who shook his head.

"Not quite that!" he demurred, "but I think I know at least one of her haunts. I'll tell you about it later."

"Good!" the detective exclaimed joyfully, "come along! Drinks first, then eats! After that we've got to plan things—preparatory to doing them!"

At the door of the Caledonian Hotel they were met by the talkative proprietor, who addressed Gilmartin.

"There's old Davy Couch in the bar, sir," he said, "who says you've told him to get a drink at your expense."

"If Davy is the coxswain of the lifeboat," Gilmartin ordered cheerfully, "let him have as long and as strong a drink as he wants. But first of all, listen to what we ourselves want in the way of eats and drinks."

CHAPTER XXVI

ANOTHER DISAPPEARANCE

ON the following morning Gilmartin stood at the window of his hotel bedroom looking down at the little harbour below him, with its boats all resting on the slimy bottom, for the tide was out. A leisurely postman, hobnailed boots sounding clear on the cobbles, was going on his rounds from house to house with none of that springy tread which characterises his modern London colleague, and stopping every now and then to exchange amenities with an acquaintance. The detective turned away and strode out of the room in search of breakfast. Only the Plymouth morning papers had as yet been delivered, and Gilmartin, who had become a thorough Londoner in this respect, did not even glance at the particular specimen which a somewhat decrepit waiter placed before him, preferring to get the first taste of the day's news from a Metropolitan daily even though it meant waiting for their arrival until later.

After the meal the Irishman sauntered out in the direction of the police-station where he found the sergeant-in-charge reading his morning correspondence. He had not seen this worthy on the previous day and was obliged to introduce himself.

"I was just going to send these over to you, sir," the sergeant said, handing over a couple of letters.

Gilmartin sat down and tore open one which was addressed to him in the rather schoolboyish hand of Inspector Peters. He grunted with satisfaction at the item of news conveyed to him in the first paragraph,

that the half-breed Hooky the Chink had been located and that his every movement was being watched.

The Irishman sat up erect as he read the rest of his colleague's letter.

"There is a very curious case," wrote Peters, "which has cropped up. Mrs. Gilmartin whom I saw this evening says she is sure it has a connection with the cases you and I are investigating, but I don't know. You will remember that when I told you of Aussie Albert's movements I reported that he went into a costumier's shop in New Bond Street and remained there a very short time. We attached no importance to the matter at the time. Now, this morning the manageress of that same shop came to the Yard and reported that the proprietor, her employer, has been missing since Friday midday. He has not come near the shop since nor has he been seen at his home in Richmond where he lives alone, served by a housekeeper and two maids. The manageress stated that he seemed worried for some time past and used to walk up and down talking to himself.

"On Friday about midday he went out, saying that he would not be back until the following day by twelve o'clock with the wages of the assistants, but he did not turn up. The staff waited until the afternoon, but he did not arrive, so the manageress took the responsibility of paying their wages out of money takings in the shop.

"As her employer did not arrive on Monday she inquired at his Richmond home and was told by the housekeeper that he had gone down to the country in his car on Friday but that he had not yet returned. As this had often happened before she was not uneasy, but now as he is still absent she fears that he may have had an accident or be suffering from a loss of memory —you know, the usual stuff in these cases.

"The case has been given to Miller for the usual inquiries. He took the ordinary course and let the newspapers know. Luckily he found a photo of the

man at Richmond and as he was busy on something else as well, I volunteered to take a copy of it to the *Planet*. In the meantime I called out at your place for some papers I had left behind on your desk, and happened to mention this disappearance to Mrs. G. and the young lady, and showed them the photograph. I had no thought of anything except making talk, but they both said that there was a connection between the cases. However, it is getting near post time and I must stop, but Mrs. G. told me she was writing to give you her reasons for thinking as she does. In any case, get to-morrow's *Planet*. You will see all about it there and be better able to follow Mrs. G.'s reasoning."

The letter came to an abrupt end here with a scribbled signature as if Peters had been in a hurry. He had, however, found time—perhaps on his way to the post-office—to scribble a postscript in pencil along the margin of the last page :

" P.S. Learnt since that missing man's car found on Ham Common near his home. Believe body will be found in the river if anywhere. P."

Gilmartin then turned to his wife's letter which, though long, he read twice through. The station sergeant did not make a sound, as if he realised that the detective's letters were of the utmost importance, and he jumped when Gilmartin suddenly looked up and asked :

" London papers in yet ? "

" They're in, sir, but the boy hasn't delivered them yet. I might be able to get one at the newsagent's, though."

" Good ! Get me a *Planet* ! "

When the sergeant returned with the paper the detective opened it at the first page and found that " MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF WELL-

KNOWN BOND STREET COSTUMIER" had usurped the place of "MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF CORNISH LANDOWNER" which had occupied the breadth of the page a couple of days before. A photograph of the missing man was given, and his name, it appeared, was Mr. Walter Newbold.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Gilmartin, staring at the newspaper, "I believe she's hit the nail on the head!"

He got up and went quickly round to the local Post Office where he wrote a telegram to Peters:

"Advise arrest Aussie and Chink charge wounding Duncan intent kill. Inform Commissioner other serious charges later."

Then he went back to the police-station.

"What arrangements are being made about an inquest?" he asked.

"The inspector has notified the coroner, sir," the sergeant replied. "And it was for this afternoon, but there's a hitch."

"What's wrong?"

"We've just got a certificate from a doctor saying that Mrs. Tretheway has a severe attack of nervous prostration and will not be able to attend to identify the body."

"A very good thing, too!" Gilmartin exclaimed.

The sergeant looked surprised.

"Did you see the body?" Gilmartin asked him.

"Yes, sir."

"A nice sight for a lady, isn't it?"

"A terrible sight, sir," the sergeant replied emphatically, "but the Law requires these things, sir."

"Well, sergeant," Gilmartin replied laughing, "I don't know if you've ever heard it, but I have it on good authority that the Law is an ass."

The Cornish policeman was shocked and showed it, but he could say nothing, as he was called to the phone.

" Yes, sir," Gilmartin heard him say. "He is here now."

" For me ? " he asked.

" Yes, sir. Inspector Straker speaking from Wadebridge."

The policeman handed over the receiver.

" Hello ! " the detective heard. " I'm glad I got you. Could you meet me at General Penhaligon's in an hour ? Aylward is conscious, and the general like an old fool has been talking too much to him, and excited him to such an extent that his temperature went up sky-high. The young fellow wants to make a statement to me, and the doctor, to calm him, has promised him that he will get me there. Will you come, too ? "

" Yes," Gilmartin replied, " I'll be there."

" We'll be back in time for the inquest," Straker went on.

" Perhaps," the detective said, " But the sergeant will probably have something to say to you about that. In case I do not come back in time I'll leave a note here for the coroner. He's got to adjourn the inquest after——"

" Why ? " Straker interrupted.

" The sergeant will tell you all about it," Gilmartin replied and handed the receiver back to the policeman.

A few minutes later he was on his way to Rock, where he chartered the same battered Ford as he had taken on the evening before. At the gates of Trevoneglaze House he met Inspector Straker on his motor cycle, and they walked up the drive together.

" I wish old Penhaligon hadn't told the lad anything," Straker grumbled.

" Oh, as far as I am concerned," said Gilmartin, " It doesn't matter a row of pins. The only thing is that it mightn't be very good for the young chap's health, and I'm sorry for that."

" Won't his statement help ? " the Cornishman asked in surprise.

" Not enormously," the Irishman replied. " I think

I know more or less what he is going to say. I really came only because there is no useful work I can do just now. I'm marking time until I hear from your friend Douglas again."

"Ah, I see!"

At the door of the house they were met by Betty Penhaligon whom Gilmartin recognised as the girl he had seen at Wadebridge station on Monday morning.

"Oh, please do not worry him too much!" she pleaded. "He is really very ill."

Gilmartin gave her one of his cheeriest smiles.

"We're not such terrible people, Miss Penhaligon," he said. "In the first place we are going to listen to what Mr. Aylward has to say only because he has asked to make a statement, and doing so may make him feel easier in his mind. Beside that I must insist on a doctor being present, for I don't want to question him at all unless he is fit to be questioned. Now, does that satisfy you?"

"Then you don't believe he killed Mr. Tretheway?" the girl exclaimed joyfully.

"I didn't say so," Gilmartin replied diplomatically. "But if he says that he didn't, I'll tell him that I believe him."

Inspector Straker looked surprised and even scandalised.

"You mean that you will say so only to pacify him?" Miss Penhaligon asked. "But he didn't! I'm sure he didn't."

Gilmartin was glad to see a male figure descending the broad staircase.

"Oh, this is the doctor," the girl said. "Doctor Trefusis—Mr.——"

"Gilmartin!" the Irishman supplied.

"Mr. Gilmartin says," she went on, "that he wishes you to be present when he questions Charlie."

"I cannot allow much questioning, gentlemen," the doctor said to the two police-officers.

"I have an idea," Gilmartin replied, "that very little questioning will be necessary."

"Then let us go on up and get it over," the medical man directed, turning to ascend again. "You too, Miss Penhaligon! Mr. Aylward wants you to hear."

They went up.

CHAPTER XXVII

AYLWARD MAKES A STATEMENT

GILMARTIN studied unostentatiously the face of the man on the bed, or as much of it as he could see, for the head was swathed in bandages and cotton wool. He reflected that the sick man would have made a fine model for a picture of one of olden Spain's beruffed and beribboned grandees. His pale face, rendered paler by weakness, was in violent contrast to his dark eyes and coal-black eyebrows and beard. The latter, thrown forward by the bandages which passed under it, gave to him an appearance of aggressiveness curiously reminiscent to the detective of a Latin Captain Kettle, which was belied by the softness of the dark eyes which sought out the lithe figure of Betty Penhaligon as she came into the room followed by the three men. There were no signs of the violent temper of which Gilmartin had heard and which Aylward had doubtless inherited from some Spanish forbear, for though the expression of his features was indicative of the pain he was suffering and of a certain anxiety, there was nothing in it of evil or peevishness.

The girl advanced towards the bed with a tremulous smile, and introduced Gilmartin by name. Straker, the sick man evidently knew.

The detective held out his hand and Aylward in obvious surprise at the gesture clasped it with his free hand which lay above the coverlid. The other arm presented the appearance of a neatly packed bale of cotton. A large hillock lower down showed that a leg had been similarly bandaged and enveloped.

"Good morning, Mr. Aylward," Gilmartin said with

a subdued cheerfulness. "We have come to hear that statement of yours, but there was really no hurry."

"I suppose not," Aylward replied weakly. "I couldn't very well get away in this state."

"I didn't know there was any question of your getting away," the detective answered, still smiling. "As a matter of fact we have come, I understand, at your request, and I may say that even now you needn't make any statement if you don't feel up to it. I think I could make a good guess at all—or nearly all—you are going to say."

"I doubt it," Aylward half-smiled. "And even if so I'd rather talk now, if you don't mind."

"Very good!" Gilmartin nodded, and pulled a chair closer to the bed. Straker and the doctor remained standing. Both seemed surprised at Gilmartin's attitude. Miss Penhaligon expressed her attitude in a question.

"Are you not going to write it down, Mr. Gilmartin?" she asked.

The detective smiled.

"No," he said, "Mr. Aylward is going to live a long time yet and can write it down later for himself if he likes. Besides, it would take too long and I have a very good memory."

"Where shall I begin?" the sick man asked.

"Anywhere you like," Gilmartin replied, "Preferably, however, at the reasons for the quarrel with your uncle."

Aylward closed his eyes and the doctor came forward.

"It's all right, doctor," the young man said, "I'm only looking for the right words. Betty, you'll have to excuse this part of it. Perhaps you'd rather not hear."

"Don't be silly, Charlie!" Betty answered, patting his hand.

"The quarrel on Friday night," Aylward then began abruptly, "was not the first. I had quarrelled with Uncle Amos before, for at every turn I heard

rumours of his carrying on an intrigue with a vulgar little shop girl from Padstow. I knew that he was in the habit for some months of driving out at night, but I never took any particular interest in his movements until the rumours reached me. I was very angry because of Aunt Esther and taxed him with his intrigue. He was merely insulting. Things came to a climax last week when Tony Oliver—Young's chauffeur—told me that he had met the old man in the Napier with the girl, driving in the direction of Wadebridge with a pile of luggage on the grid. On Friday night, I had already gone to bed and was nearly asleep when I heard Aunt Esther remonstrating with Uncle Amos. That was the first I knew that she had ever suspected anything. The old man was very nasty in his replies to my aunt and I jumped out of bed and interfered in the quarrel."

Aylward lay back to recover breath and Betty put a glass of water to his lips. He sipped a few drops. Straker and the doctor had meanwhile tiptoed towards chairs and sat down.

"Yes," the young man went on, "I interfered and nearly got knocked out for my pains; the old man was as strong as a horse. I used some pretty violent language and told him what I thought of him. He only sneered at me and told me I was a damned young puppy to come and lecture a man of his age, that in any case I had no *locus standi*—though these are not his words—in the house and taunted me with eating the bread of charity—his bread! At that, I took Aunt Esther out of the room and told him that I'd eat no more bread under his roof. Then I dressed and packed a suit-case and went down to my two-seater. I filled up with petrol and drove away, intending to pass the night at Wadebridge or Bodmin."

"What time was this?" Gilmartin asked as Aylward paused.

"The watch in my two-seater said twenty-five minutes past twelve as I was driving out of the front

gate." Aylward replied and went on : " When I had passed through St. Minfred, about half a mile on this side of it, my lights suddenly gave out and I stopped on the side of the road to see what was wrong. I had a flash lamp and a spare element, and I worked by that light, but I couldn't find the fault. I don't know how long I tried but it must have been a long time for I was soaked with rain. While I was there, a large car—I don't know what make but it was a closed car—passed without stopping, though I made signals with my flashlight to stop it. It was going towards St. Minfred—that is, in the opposite direction to where I was headed. I couldn't see what sort of individual was driving. My flashlight finally gave out and I decided to drive on, for I wouldn't go back to Polreath. As I said, I was very wet and knowing the road well, I drove fast in spite of having no lights. I did not realise that the gates here were shut and I drove full tilt right into them. The next thing, I found myself here in bed all tied up in bandages."

There was silence for a moment, then Gilmartin asked :

" Why did you drive in here ? It is off the main road ! "

" Yes, but I decided that late though it was I would ask for a shake-down here for the night. I was going to rouse Martyn—the butler—by throwing gravel at his window. He would have let me in like a shot."

" Of course, he would," Betty confirmed.

Nobody spoke for a moment. Gilmartin looked at the doctor, who nodded.

" Do you mind, Mr. Aylward," the detective said, " If I ask you one more question ? "

" Not a bit ! Carry on ! " Aylward, who now appeared to be more vigorous than before, replied.

" Did you strike your uncle or try to do so ? " the Irishman asked.

" Yes," the young man replied, " I tried hard

when I first came into the room, but he held me off easily."

"Did it ever occur to you," Gilmartin went on after a pause, "that there might be another object besides a vulgar intrigue for your uncle's nocturnal jaunts—if I may so call them?"

The others sat up, all attention! Aylward stared and did not reply for a moment.

"N-no!" he stammered. "What other object could they have?"

"A good old Cornish sport," Gilmartin replied with a smile, "Smuggling!"

"Smuggling? Smuggling what?"

"Ah, that is the question," the detective said with a grimmer expression than he had yet shown.

They were all looking at him.

"Such an idea never occurred to me!" Aylward said, "But I shouldn't be surprised."

Gilmartin rose and held out his hand.

"Well, that's all!" he said.

"But—but," Aylward asked, "Where does the girl come in? Was that part of it all a lie?"

"No!" Gilmartin replied slowly, "That part of it appears to be true. As to her part in the matter I am going to find that out very soon."

As the two police officials were leaving the room Aylward spoke again, this time more feebly.

"Do you believe my statement?" he asked.

Gilmartin turned and smiled.

"It is practically word for word," he replied, "What I had made up my mind it would be."

"Now what on earth does he mean by that?" Betty Penhaligon asked herself, but she said nothing to Aylward, who closed his eyes wearily but seemed satisfied. On their way down, the inspectors met General Penhaligon who was pacing the hall with a worried air.

"Well?" he asked.

"Nothing!" replied Gilmartin who had none of the

country policeman's awe of the local magnate, " Why on earth did you endanger that young man's health by letting your tongue run away with you ? "

The old squire bristled and spluttered.

" I—I—I—" he growled, " I had to clear the matter up—for—for—for personal reasons."

" Well, general," Gilmartin countered in the soft tone he invariably used when he wished to be nasty, " It is the job of the police to clear up such matters—for public reasons, and you would do well not to usurp their functions."

" You—you——" spluttered the peppery old gentleman. " Who the— what the——"

But Gilmartin had followed the scandalised Straker out to the open and was already entering his Ford.

" Coming to Padstow ? " he asked the Cornishman.

" Yes," Straker replied, " I'll ride to Rock and take the bike over in the ferry. By Golly, you did rile the old boy ! "

Gilmartin laughed and signalled his driver to start. A preliminary roar of the motor-cycle engine was followed by the chug-chugging of Straker behind.

On the quay at Padstow Gilmartin laughed to see his journalist friend Pepler awaiting him.

" Oh, you old fraud ! " the reporter shouted, " You old fraud ! Where's that scoop ? Where's that exclusive story you promised to a poor hard-working journalist ? "

Gilmartin waited until they were alongside before answering.

" You'll get it ? " he said, " Come to my rooms at the Caledonian in an hour and you'll get it. Where are all the boys I met at Exeter ? "

" Oh ! Did you meet them ? " Pepler exclaimed gleefully, " And avoided them ? Good man ! They've gone back to Town. Saw no story, but I trusted you old son ! "

" Sounded like it a moment ago ! " Gilmartin commented dryly.

" Oh, go on ! " Peplar retorted, " I was only joking! "

" All right ! " the detective smiled, " I'll see you in an hour and give you a beautiful story for the dogdays. But on one condition ! Even if you write it now you are to hold it up till I give the word."

" Then why give me the story now ? "

" Because I promised it, you chump ! " Gilmartin answered, " And because later on, if the thing comes off I won't have time to put you wise. If it doesn't, no harm done and no story. Get me ? "

" Got you ! " the journalist replied, " And I'll say it looks good ! "

" It is." Gilmartin assured him, " Go and sharpen your pencils ! You'll need them."

The detective then followed Straker to the police station. As he entered, the sergeant handed him an orange envelope.

" A telegram for you, sir ! " he said.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A RUSTIC BELLE

GILMARTIN tore open the envelope and read:

"Effected suggested arrests Following wire handed in Rosslare delivered Aussies lodgings later Message begins upsuypvkrf pvmtiaizfy ek22mj2zff tjkkvkvccc message ends Prisoners refuse information Duncan out danger but unable make statement —Peters."

The detective looked up.

"Sergeant," he said, "Go and have that girl Minnie What's-her-name brought here at once. I want to have another chat with her. Also see if you can get me a copy of last Sunday's *Weekly Monitor*."

"Very good, sir," the sergeant replied and left the station.

Gilmartin entered the charge room where he found Straker in conversation with an elderly man dressed in black who looked like a noncomformist clergyman but whom the detective identified correctly as the coroner. Straker introduced them.

"This is a nuisance, chief inspector," the coroner said, "This illness of Mrs. Tretheway, I mean. Isn't there anybody else—her daughter or somebody—who will do in her place?"

"No, sir," Gilmartin replied, "I don't think so. There is a Miss Tretheway—a sister of Mr. Tretheway—who lives inland somewhere but she is very old, and in any case we could not get her here in time. Miss Kitty Tretheway, the daughter, is in London; Mr.

Aylward, a nephew by marriage, is lying injured at General Penhaligon's and Mr. Duncan, a close friend of the family, is also in London—in hospital."

"It is certainly a tragic household," the coroner remarked, "Then I suppose there is nothing to be done. We must have somebody kin to identify the body. We shall have to put the inquest off."

"I suggest, sir," said Gilmartin, "That you hold the inquest—that is to say that you begin it by taking the evidence of the men who found the body and the medical evidence, and that you then adjourn for a few days."

"M' yes," the coroner agreed, "I suppose we'd better do that. Better than doing nothing. Inspector Straker, would you see to it. Just get the room ready and the people together. We shall begin in ten minutes."

When Straker left the room the coroner turned to Gilmartin.

"Now, chief inspector," he said with a smile, "I'm an old criminal lawyer and you can't pull the wool over my eyes. What have you got up your sleeve? You want this inquest adjourned for some reason of your own. Isn't that so?"

"Not quite, sir," Gilmartin denied, "I want it adjourned, but for no reason of my own."

"I understand," the coroner replied, "You want it adjourned, as they always say, in the public interest."

"Precisely, sir!"

"Good! May I know any details?"

The detective strode over to the door and shut it, then beckoned the coroner over to the window where in low tones he talked to him for perhaps five minutes. The official let him speak without interruption, only nodding now and then.

"H'm!" he said when Gilmartin had finished, "H'm! Yes! Of course there must be an adjournment! Certainly! Certainly!"

"Thank you, sir," the detective replied.

"You have told Straker nothing of this?" the coroner asked.

"Not a word!"

"Why?"

"Well, sir," Gilmartin replied smiling, "In these country places news has a curious knack of being broadcast from no visible or audible source, so I thought it better to keep things to myself till I am ready. In fact, sir, had you not told me that you were an old lawyer I should not have said anything to you, leaving you to do as you wished."

"H'm!" the other exclaimed, "That would have been awkward!"

Straker entered and announced that everything was in readiness and on his heels followed the station sergeant in company with Minnie Grant and her husband. The sergeant handed Gilmartin a newspaper.

"What is *that* doing here?" Gilmartin shouted.

"He *would* come, sir," the sergeant replied apologetically, "Says he has a right to come."

"Indeed!" the detective said, "He talks about his rights, does he?"

He walked slowly over to the half-frightened, half-defiant Bert.

"Would you mind stepping outside?" he said slowly in a silky tone.

The other retreated before him looking up into the detective's steely eyes.

"I—I—I'll—" he stammered, "I'll not go! I want to stay—I want to know what you're going to do with my—my wife."

Gilmartin's hand, on the point of gripping the little man's shoulder, drew back and he burst out laughing, turning round to face Minnie Grant. The girl made no effort to hide her apprehension and her fear of this big laughing man, and edged away from him towards the sergeant, who, at any rate, was a devil she knew. Gilmartin wheeled round suddenly again towards the little commercial traveller, causing him to jump like

the rabbit to which the detective was mentally comparing him.

"Well, sonny," the Irishman said, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do with your precious wife. I'm going to ask her about three questions—not in your presence, however—and if she doesn't give me satisfactory answers I'm going to lock her up on a very serious charge. I may do that in any case! As for you, since you are so anxious to come here, you will now stay here until I am ready to have a talk with you."

Gilmartin turned to the sergeant.

"You will probably be attending the inquest, sergeant," he said to him, "But I presume you can find a man who will stay here with Grant and see that he doesn't leave until I have said that he may."

"Yes, sir," the sergeant replied, "I can arrange that."

Inspector Straker and the coroner moved out of the charge room, the former openly wondering what manner of man was this London colleague of his, the coroner faintly amused.

"And now," Gilmartin went on, "Can you let Minnie and me have a room for our little chat? Are you married, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir. My apartment is upstairs, and you can use my sitting room."

"The very thing!" the Irishman approved, and then in a lower tone for the sergeant's ear only, "I wonder if your wife would mind staying in the room with us while I question this young woman?"

"I'll tell her, sir," the sergeant replied in the same confidential tone, "And you're quite right, sir. You never know what the likes of her'll be up to."

The policeman went out and soon returned. At his nod Gilmartin turned to the girl.

"Come on, Minnie," he said pleasantly, "you and I are going to have a talk."

The girl did not move.

The detective looked at her steadily for a moment.

"I said: Come on, Minnie!" he repeated, "And I don't like to have to say things twice."

This time she followed him, though she muttered sulkily:

"I'm not going to say one word!"

In the sergeant's sitting-room upstairs Gilmartin greeted pleasantly the buxom Cornishwoman who was there. She in her turn looked with a mixture of pity and contempt at the unfortunate Minnie Grant *née* Hawke.

"Sit down, Minnie!" the detective began.

The girl remained standing.

"I said: Sit down, Minnie!" Gilmartin barked sternly, and with the shock Minnie flopped into an arm-chair behind her.

"Now, Mrs. Grant," the Irishman addressed her more gently, repressing a smile with difficulty, "You have been meddling in very serious matters for which there are severe penalties. I don't want to be too hard on you and I'm going to give you a chance to get let off easily by helping me. I know a great deal more than you think, so you will gain nothing by lying."

"I dunno nothing!" she replied as sulkily as before.

"Oh, yes, you know a great deal," Gilmartin contradicted flatly, "Now my first question is this: How were your meetings with Mr. Tretheway arranged?"

Silence!

"All right!" Gilmartin went on, "I'll put it another way: Were the letters you got ordinary letters or were they in code?"

This time Minnie started but she remained obstinately mute.

"Ah!" the detective exclaimed, "I see they were in code!"

Still the girl was keeping her expressed resolution not to say a word. Gilmartin waited patiently. Seeing that she had definitely decided to remain silent he then turned his back on her and unfolded the news-

paper he held in his hand, looking for the sporting pages. Now and then he looked over the top of the paper into the mirror above the mantelpiece in front of him. He found the racing code for the week and then drew Peters' telegram from his pocket. It was only a minute's work for him to discover that the key given was useless for the message in question, but he went on jotting down letters. The sergeant's wife was looking unconcernedly out of the window. Without raising his head the Irishman looked at the mirror. He smiled to himself for as he had expected, Minnie Grant behind him was craning her shapely neck to get a glimpse of the papers in his hand. He turned abruptly. She drew back hastily.

"Caught you, Minnie!" he said playfully, "What did you want to see? This?"

He held up the newspaper and watched her face.

"It's only the *Weekly Monitor*," he continued—and then very deliberately stared into her eyes—"Last Sunday's *Weekly Monitor*."

He was not disappointed. Minnie Grant's features were not very expressive, her eyes especially were always somewhat bovine, but now they flashed and in that flash was triumph—and, Gilmartin was sure, relief. He allowed the flash to fade away and said in his most silky tone:

"I see you are glad it is *last* Sunday's."

"Yes, I am!" she replied unthinkingly, and suddenly shut her mouth firmly.

"Now, you've done it!" Gilmartin crowed unashamed, "You've answered my question, and now you must answer another. What week's *Monitor* should it have been to decode a message sent to day?"

Minnie Grant's lips were still shut tight as if she were afraid a word might escape without her knowledge.

Gilmartin rose with pretended weariness.

"Oh!" he said, "Life is too short for this sort of thing! If you won't answer, you won't! I'm very sorry for you, that's all, for I'm going to lock you up."

He strode towards the door, but before he reached it the girl opened her mouth, and throwing herself on the floor, screamed—one piercing scream after another!

"See to her!" Gilmartin directed the sergeant's wife as he fled ignominiously, "I'll send your husband up."

"It's a good slappin' she needs!" the good woman remarked dispassionately and picked up a vase of flowers and water.

CHAPTER XXIX

A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

THE detective ran down the stairs and made his way to the room in which the inquest was being held. He sidled through the onlookers till he reached the sergeant.

"Go upstairs," he whispered, "Take that girl down and put her in a cell as soon as she has finished screaming and keep her there till this is over."

The sergeant nodded and went out.

The coxswain of the lifeboat was giving his evidence at that moment in practically the same terms as when he had told his story to the detective. Though he was not asked he insisted on paying tribute to Gilmartin as "a sharp 'un" and on stating "on his Bible oath" that the ropes on the wrists had been tied by a landsman. After him came the doctor who in cool professional tones testified that he had come to the conclusion that the man had been killed by a blow on the temple, that the other disfiguring wounds had been inflicted after death and that furthermore the body had been immersed in the water after death. Straker here put a question:

"Do you think, doctor, that he was deliberately drowned?"

The doctor looked towards Gilmartin and caught his meaning look before replying:

"I am not prepared to give an opinion on that."

"But," Straker pressed, "the tying of the arms and legs is not without signification?"

"It certainly appears to have a signification," the

doctor replied, "But to speculate on the matter is outside my province."

"Good man!" Gilmartin approved inwardly.

Neither the inspector nor the coroner insisted any further. This terminated the proceedings for the time and Gilmartin left the room. He went to the charge room for his hat and stick, and found there a bored constable and a disconsolate Bert Grant. The constable stood up and Bert imitated him.

"Please, sir," the latter said timidly.

"Yes?"—ferociously.

"You have locked Minnie up?"

"I have given orders to that effect. What about it?"

"Please, sir," the poor little man went on, "I suppose that means that she wouldn't answer any questions? She's very stubborn, but would it be any good to her if I answered them?"

"Hello!" Gilmartin exclaimed, "Are you in on this show too?"

"Oh, no, sir," the other replied, "It was me took Minnie out of it all, sir. I didn't like it at all, sir."

"And what do you know about it?"

"Not much, sir, except what Minnie told me, but I'll answer any questions I can, sir, if it'll do her any good."

Gilmartin hesitated.

"I can promise nothing," he said, "However, just tell me this! Have you any knowledge of code messages she used to get?"

"Yes, sir, they were about——"

"I know what they were about. Do you know how they were decoded?"

"Yes, sir, Minnie told me. It's the racing code in the *Weekly Monitor* the paper——"

"I know that," the detective interrupted impatiently. "What week?"

"I was just going to say, sir, the paper that's out three Sundays before the message is written."

"Good!" Gilmartin exclaimed, "But how the dickens am I to get hold of them quickly?"

This was more of a soliloquy than a question to the man before him. Bert, however, replied:

"That's easy, sir. Minnie has them pasted in an exercise book at home, all dated."

"Now why didn't I think of that?" Gilmartin exclaimed, "Constable, take this man to his wife's home and bring back that exercise book. He is free to move about as he likes then, provided he doesn't leave the town."

"But—but," Bert objected, "What about Minnie—my wife?"

"Oh, go to—— Go and get that book!" Gilmartin roared, "We'll see about Minnie later!"

The constable pushed Bert out before him.

During their absence Gilmartin busied himself with the charge sheet relating to Mrs. Bert Grant and a few minutes after their return he was already seated in his room at the Caledonian Hotel with the book of newspaper cuttings before him. He soon found the key he wanted. It was:

M L U R N E Y P W X V O 3 G

A 2 H F J K T I B C D Z Q S

It was child's play and a matter of a few minutes to evolve from Peters's telegram the following:

"hightidefr idaypmport kellanlorr yneededxxx."

He had just jotted down the final letter when his journalist friend burst into the room.

"I saw you come in to the inquest," Pepler began without ceremony, "But I didn't see you when it was over. I went to send off my story then, and here I am!"

"You're an awful ass sometimes, Pepler," Gilmartin laughed. "Why did you send off that story? Didn't I say that I was going to give you a scoop? Anybody can get an inquest."

"What!" the journalist exclaimed, "I shouldn't have sent it?"

Without waiting for a reply he dashed out of the room again, shouting:

"Back in a minute! Going to send a wire not to insert it."

"Not that it matters!" muttered Gilmartin as he continued his deciphering. It was not difficult for him to reduce the message to the following:

"High tide Friday p.m. Port Kellan. Lorry needed."

Then he went down to the hotel phone and called up Commander Douglas.

"At what time," he asked that officer without preliminary, "Is high tide on Friday—that is, to-morrow evening?"

He waited a moment.

"Eleven thirty-six? That's after dark. Where's Port Kellan? Oh, is that so? The same place! Probably their name for it! Can you come over now and I'll explain fully. Right!"

When the journalist came back panting he found the detective and the Coastguard Officer awaiting him—the latter with undisguised impatience. Introducing the two men, Gilmartin began:

"I'm telling you all this so that I may have to tell it only once. You Seth, must promise that not a word goes to your paper before to-morrow night."

"I promise, old sleuth. Fire ahead!"

Uninterrupted by either, Gilmartin talked to them for over half an hour. The Commander chuckled as he listened, and Pepler as he wrote rapidly in a shorthand that nobody but himself could possibly decipher was muttering gleefully:

"Oh, boy! Oh! My sainted aunt! Lovely!"

When the detective had finished his two hearers stared at him and then looked at each other.

"Isn't he a little wonder?" exclaimed the irrepressible Pepler.

"Shut up!" Gilmartin ordered, and turned to the Commander.

"You will have plenty of time to make the preparations," he said, "I'll wire Superintendent Liddell at once and get him to come along with a few men. Then we must take a couple of Customs johnnies with us."

The Commander suddenly burst into loud laughter.

"It's d———d funny!" he roared, "I'll make a point of watching the Custom's fellows' faces to-morrow night. You know they hate anybody else to do their job for them."

Gilmartin smiled.

"How many men can you get together all told?" he asked.

"Eight coastguards!" Commander Douglas replied, "More if necessary, but that ought to be enough."

"Quite enough!" the detective confirmed.

"Good!" the Coastguard rose and pressed a bell, "I think this is an occasion for splicing the main brace. To-morrow I'm going for a morning constitutional as far as what these fellows call Port Kellan—to study the terrain, as the soldiers say."

"I'll go with you if you don't mind," Pepler said, "And then I'll write the first part of my story in advance."

"But you won't send it!" Gilmartin warned.

"I've promised," the journalist replied, "But you must let me wire the paper to keep me the space."

Gilmartin nodded.

"No harm in that!" he said.

"And I'm to be let in on the grand finale!" Pepler persisted.

"As far as I am concerned, Seth," Gilmartin laughed, "you can drive the lorry. But the show is the Commander's!"

"You're on!" the Commander assured the journalist.

"What are you going to do yourself?" he asked Gilmartin.

"I'm going to have a talk with my friend Bert

Grant," the detective replied. "I'm also going to send a wire to the Civic Guard headquarters at Rosslare. Then I'm going to laze and admire the beauties of the Cornish coast."

The landlord came in and heard their respective orders for liquid refreshments, informing them at the same time that lunch was ready.

CHAPTER XXX

BY SEA AND LAND

ON Friday Gilmartin passed most of his time apparently as he had promised—in lazing and in admiring the beauties of the Cornish coast. Before breakfast, however, he had written for nearly an hour and the result of his labours had been later, on his way to the police-station, consigned to the care of His Majesty's mails. At the police-station he again interviewed Minnie Grant whom he found having breakfast under the eye of the sergeant's wife, the sergeant himself standing at the window of his kitchen living-room.

"Well, Mrs. Grant!" Gilmartin greeted her. "This is a poor way of spending a honeymoon. Haven't you come to your senses yet?"

The girl looked less sulky and more subdued than on the previous day and the detective hoped that she would decide to tell him what he still wanted to know, but she remained silent.

"Come now!" he urged her, "why not tell me the whole story? It will count in your favour, you know."

"Go on, Minnie," the sergeant's wife seconded, "don't be a little fool! The gentleman doesn't want to be hard on you."

"I—I—I daren't," the girl whimpered pushing her cup away.

"Why?" Gilmartin asked.

"Look at what they did to poor Mr. Tretheway!" came forth in a rush. "They'd do the same to me."

"You got in with a nice crowd!" the detective remarked. "Who are *they?*"

"I can't tell you."

"Oh, yes, you can," Gilmartin contradicted. "Do you mean Aussie Albert and Hooky the Chink?"

Mrs. Grant started. This London detective evidently knew a lot.

"Yes and they're——" she began, but Gilmartin interrupted.

"Because if you do," he said, "you needn't be uneasy. They are both in Brixton jail by now."

The girl's eyes lighted up, but became dull again.

"They're not the only ones," she muttered.

Gilmartin turned away and addressed the sergeant.

"What's the programme?" he asked with a jerk of the head towards the girl.

"We're taking her to Wadebridge this morning, sir, by the ten o'clock train," the sergeant replied. "It's court day there."

"H'm! I see." Gilmartin with a nod to them all collectively, left the sergeant's quarters.

As he strode out in the direction of the quay he heard a timid voice behind him.

"Please, sir, may I speak to you?"

He turned. It was a worried, unshaven Bert Grant.

"Ah! It's you!" Gilmartin exclaimed. "I wanted to see you. Yes, you may speak to me if you're game for a walk up the hill to the cliffs. I'm going for a walk."

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir," the little man assented with pathetic eagerness, hastening to keep up with the big Irishman.

"Will it help Minnie," he asked, "if I tell you all she told me about things?"

"You're very fond of Minnie?" the detective stated rather than asked, in a gentler tone that he had yet used to the man.

"God, sir!" the poor little fellow answered, "I'd give—I'd give my life for her—I would!"

"You would, eh?" Gilmartin echoed. "Well,

that won't be necessary, just now anyhow. But let me give you a bit of advice ; you don't mind, eh ? "

" No, sir ! Oh, no, sir ! " was the eager reply.

" Well, then, listen ! You won't have much of a life to give for anybody if you don't buck up and be a bit more of a man. When your wife is clear of this trouble you've got to be firm with her. She's a handful, if you don't mind me saying so, and needs a strong hand. Have you got it ? "

" I—I don't know, sir."

" Well, if you haven't, God help you, for she has a will that needs some mastering. Master her, young fellow, master her. She'll respect you for it, provided you start at once. Don't put it off."

" But——" the other began.

" No ' buts,' " Gilmartin interrupted. " And that's all on that subject, which isn't my business at all. Don't say another word now till we get up there on the cliffs. Then spill your story and I'll tell you what can be done."

On the cliff the two men—Gilmartin's tall figure with black wavy hair crowning it contrasting strangely with that of the weedy commercial traveller the lank blond strands of whose " quiff " kept falling over his eyes—sat and talked for half an hour. Then they rose and came down into Padstow again. On the way down the detective asked suddenly :

" How much money can you raise ? "

The other looked astonished—even frightened—but replied :

" I have near three hundred in the bank—savin's."

" That's quite enough," said Gilmartin and went on, " now they're taking your wife before the magistrate at Wadebridge this morning. Go to the court yourself. See Inspector Straker and tell him I sent you. I'll 'phone him up myself and arrange matters with him. He'll make no objections if you offer bail for your wife so that she won't need to be remanded in custody."

"Oh, thank you, sir," the little man broke in, "I'll——"

"Wait a minute," the detective stopped him. "All this is on one condition, that you take your wife off, say to Plymouth, for the day, and that you allow her to have no communication with anybody except yourself either by word or writing until to-morrow morning. Can you do that?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good! Off you go! You've just time to catch your train."

Gilmartin, walking more slowly, watched with a pitying smile the pathetic little figure running down towards the railway station.

"Perhaps he can hold his own in the commercial room of a country hotel," he reflected, "but he's going to have a tough time with that stupid wife of his."

As he reached the quay he saw before him Commander Douglas and Seth Pepler in suits of inconspicuous heather mixture and carrying stout walking sticks making their way towards the ferry landing stage, but he made no attempt to attract their attention.

"I'll see him later," he muttered.

During the rest of the day the inhabitants of Padstow, every one of whom knew who he was, wondered to see the London detective idling about the town, chatting with fishermen and loungers on the quay. They did not see him, however, at ten o'clock that evening when in the darkness he walked quickly along the path which led from the quay to the coastguard station at the mouth of the Camel Estuary. He himself could hardly see two yards in front of him, but he had reconnoitred during the day with the apparent indifference of a summer visitor, and knew his way. He had almost reached his destination when he heard a whisper in front.

"Is that you, sir?"

"Yes," he whispered in reply. "Everybody here?"

"Not yet, sir," came the voice, "the commander has to come yet. We came one by one."

"Right! Where is the boat?"

"This way, sir!"

Gilmartin felt a hand touch him and then saw the silhouette between him and the water of his friend, the coastguard from Trebetherick, Bill Maunders. He was led over rough rocks and shingle and in a minute found himself catching hold of the gunwale of a roomy motor fishing-boat. He had no time to see his companions when a hoarse whisper came from the shore.

"Ahoy, there!"

"All aboard, sir!" Maunders replied.

A scrambling over the rocks and the stout figure of Commander Douglas, now in uniform, jumped nimbly into the seat beside Gilmartin.

"Ready?" he said at once. "Let her go!"

A well-cared-for engine purred at once and the boat moved out towards the open sea against the flooding tide.

"Hope these clouds stay until we've finished," murmured the Commander in Gilmartin's ear. "There'll be a damn bright moon in an hour if they don't."

"Hope so!" murmured Gilmartin and peered at the other shadows in the boat. He recognised the outline of the Padstow sergeant and that of the St. Minfred constable on the seat further aft; opposite him was a man in the peaked cap of a Customs Officer. At the tiller stood Bill Maunders and in the well by the engine was another coastguard.

"I think we're on a sure thing!" the commander whispered. "My men report that a suspicious craft has been hanging about well offshore since just before sunset."

"H'm!" said Gilmartin. "By the way, the signal from the lorry is simply O.K."

"What do you—— Oh! I see. Morse!"

"Yes."

Arrived at the other side of the estuary they now hugged the shore and soon a few scattered lights on the starboard bow showed where Polreath perched with its villas and its bungalows round the bay. Soon it was left behind and they found themselves in the shelter of Pentire Head. The coastguard shut off the engine and they heard the plash of the waves on the rocks and the sucking sound of the water as it entered and then retreated from the many little caves in the cliff side. Commander Douglas gave a short blast on a tiny whistle which was immediately answered from the shore.

"This is where I go ashore," he said to the detective, "the lorry is over behind Pentire Farm."

"Right!" said Gilmartin, "I'll meet you at Port what's-its-name."

Meanwhile the engine was slowly purring again and the boat was edging in towards a low shelf of rock. Then came a soft bump and the commander jumped out towards a dark figure.

"Good-bye!" he whispered back, "and remember, boys! No noise and no smoking!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" Maunders replied and put the tiller over.

In half an hour they were in the shadow of an island rock whose entire circumference was not more than three hundred yards and whose population was exclusively of the feathered species. As they came alongside, a few birds, disturbed by the slight noise, began to chatter uneasily.

"Damn them!" exclaimed Maunders, "I forgot them!"

In a short time, however, the birds settled down again. The men sat in silence watching by turns the sea and the shore. From where they were they had a view of Kellan Point, a lofty nose half a mile distant rising straight out of the water—and a tiny bay to one side of it which the men they were out to capture had for their own purposes named Port

Kellan. They had been half an hour in the shadow of the rock when the sharp-eyed coastguard whispered:

"Here she comes!"

They looked out to sea where a dark mass was indeed clearly visible, becoming larger with every minute. Passing on the other side of the sheltering rock its two masts and now flapping sails were soon within a hundred yards of the watchers.

"A converted yacht!" whispered Maunders to the detective, "As fast as they make 'em."

Straight for the bay the incoming vessel went and in a few minutes Gilmartin heard a rattle and a splash which told him that the anchor had been dropped. Silence again settled upon watchers and watched. Ten minutes passed and a rumbling sound reached them from the hill above the bay. Then two dim lights appeared.

"There's the lorry!" a policeman exclaimed.

"Shut up!" ordered Maunders.

From the converted yacht came no sound, but the detective saw reflected in the water the intermittent flash of an electric torch. The lorry had now come down the steep road which led to the beach and stopped, then from it also came a flash of light—three long flashes followed by a long, a short and a long flash.

"O.K.," Gilmartin interpreted.

A splash from the direction of the yacht, the hum of subdued voices, then the rhythmic sound of oars! A dinghy had been lowered and was bound shoreward.

"Now!" the detective whispered, when it had almost reached the beach, "this is where we come in! Straight for her!"

The engine purred and almost noiselessly they were entering the bay towards the smuggler, whose stern had swung shorewards with the rising tide. Under her bows they steered until Maunders felt the anchor chain. Gilmartin breathed a sigh of relief that the

moon—now behind a cloud and rising steadily—had hidden their movements from those on board, who, he concluded, were all looking towards the shore.

"Here, you, Treleaven!" Maunders whispered, "come along o' me—but quietly!"

Constable Treleaven rose and went back towards the coastguard.

"Jim!" the latter directed his colleague, "You hang on to this."

The other coastguard caught hold of the anchor chain and Maunders immediately swarmed up to the smuggler's forecastle, followed almost equally noiselessly by the policeman.

Just then a strangled shout was heard from the shore, followed by the noise of men running on the shingly beach.

"Hell!" came a shout from the sailing vessel's deck. "The police or somebody! All hands!"

Then a roar of profanity in another voice.

"Lift that anchor! Cut it away!" the men in the motor-boat heard this voice order, "and be damn quick about it!"

Gilmartin looked shorewards. Two motor boats were headed straight for the smuggler, their exhausts roaring like a battery of machine guns. A scuffle overhead attracted his attention then and he looked up to see against the sky three figures rocking to and fro in a fierce embrace.

"No! You don't!" he heard Maunders whisper hoarsely. Then quiet! A gagged man's legs, he knew, were being scientifically bound with ropes from the coastguard's pocket and his wrists locked in the policeman's handcuffs.

"Hell and damnation!" came the stentorian roar from the deck further aft. "The anchor! The hook, damn you! They're on us!"

They were! Bump! Bump! Almost simultaneously! Then the commander's shrill whistle!

"Up!" shouted Gilmartin and jumped for the

anchor chain. The others followed. On the deck were bales and boxes which impeded their progress, and the detective reached the mass of men amidships just as the struggle was over. Electric torches were flashing everywhere. In the light of his own Gilmartin recognised Superintendent Liddell and Commander Douglas.

"Fine!" the latter shouted joyfully. "Exactly according to plan as they used to say! Got those fellows in the boat nicely!"

"Good Lord!" they heard from the deck behind them. "Silk! Bales and bales of it!"

It was a conscientious Customs Officer who had lost no time before sampling the cargo which had been brought on deck in readiness for unloading.

"I thought so!" said Gilmartin, "but there's more than silk. Now, let us go down to their cabin or saloon or cuddy or whatever they call it! I suppose the prisoners are all right."

"They're being shoved over the side into a boat," came Inspector Straker's voice from the fringe of the group. "They'll soon be in the lorry on the way to Wadebridge."

"Good!" Gilmartin approved and followed Commander Douglas down a companion way.

At the door of a dimly lighted, evil-smelling compartment he nearly collided with the coastguard officer's broad back.

"Hell!" he heard Douglas exclaim, "what the blazes is this?"

He peered over the commander's shoulder. At a table, with wrists tied in front of him, sat a dishevelled man in a lounge suit, with brown pointed beard in disorder. Gilmartin pushed into the cabin.

"Mr. Newbold of Bond Street, I believe!" he said.

The man nodded.

"Here's another!" cried the commander.

It was so! Stretched at full length on a locker was

an elderly man with grey hair, dressed in the navy blue jersey and wide trousers of a seaman. His wrists and legs were also bound. Gilmartin opened a clasp knife and cut the ropes from him and from the man at the table.

"My feet also," the latter pleaded. "They're tied to the table."

"Here! Cut 'em yourself," Gilmartin said, throwing the knife on the table. "By Jove, I believe this is——"

"It's Mr. Tretheway!" Straker, now framed in the doorway, exclaimed. "Then he's not dead after all!"

"Yes," the old man in rough clothes replied, and it was in the broken voice of a very old man indeed that he added: "I'm not dead after all, but I'm very near it, thanks to this gang!"

"Gosh! What a story!" came Pepler's voice, filled with a curious mixture of glee and awe, from the passage outside.

CHAPTER XXXI

"MENTAL PROCESSES".

A MONTH later six people sat round a table in a private room in Bresciani's Restaurant. Gilmartin, the oldest of the three men among them, looked more robust than ever in his evening dress, the more so because the other two had the obvious pallor of convalescents. Aylward's face, never ruddy at the best of times, was like a waxen mask, and Duncan's healthy tan had completely disappeared. They were all cheerful, however, though a certain subdued atmosphere pervaded the room, affecting the members of the opposite sex in spite of the indices of perfect health apparent in all three.

A swarthy moustachioed Italian had served coffee—plenty of it—and having placed cigars and liqueurs in the centre of the table had disappeared.

"Well," Gilmartin remarked as he reached towards a cigar box, "since the ladies profess to enjoy tobacco smoke——"

'Provided it is not that awful old pipe of yours!" his wife interrupted from the other side of the table.

"Humph!" the detective grunted whimsically, "this is what a man lets himself in for when he marries!"

"You have let yourself in for something else this evening, Mr. Gilmartin," Betty Penhaligon countered. "You know what you promised when you accepted our invitation."

"Yes, yes," Kitty Tretheway said, patting his left arm as she spoke. "You have been so nice up to the present. Go on being nice and give us the last chapter

of the detective story—the one where everything is made clear and everybody wonders why they've been so stupid as not to have seen it before."

" And admire the great detective's cleverness," Betty Penhaligon added.

" Unfortunately," Gilmartin replied, " there's none of that sort of thing about me. If there has been any cleverness it has been on the part of my wife and Miss Tretheway. And there is really nothing to clear up. You have read the first-hand information sent by my friend Pepler to the *Planet*, and——"

" Whoa, there ! Steady ! " Duncan interposed quickly. " That's not fair. We know as well as you do that the *Planet* only got as much information as you chose to give. What we want is what the Americans call the inside dope on it."

" Besides," Aylward supplemented quietly, " what we should like to hear above all is what no paper—however well informed—could give us, namely, your mental processes."

" Good Lord ! " Gilmartin exclaimed, " you want to strip me naked. Don't you understand that that is just where I failed. My mental processes were all wrong."

However, he pushed his chair back and, crossing his legs, looked up at the very much decorated ceiling. Mrs. Gilmartin made a sign to the others to say no more. They waited in silence.

" You know," the detective said suddenly, " some of it won't make very agreeable hearing—or telling, for that matter."

Kitty Tretheway reddened but hastened to say :

" That doesn't matter. We want to hear everything—you understand, everything."

Gilmartin's nod was more like a bow. He resumed his contemplation of the ceiling.

" H'm ! " he began suddenly, " how I first came into the case you all know. You, Miss Tretheway, gave me the first account of happenings at The Mouls House.

Then I heard what Superintendent Liddell and Mr. Duncan had to say. And after that—though she did not know exactly what had occurred—I learned quite a lot from Miss Tansey, the landlady of "Ocean View." First of all, I gathered from Miss Tretheway's story and from her action in cleaning up her father's room and also from Liddell and Mr. Duncan that they believed—or at any rate feared—that Mr. Aylward had come back and attacked his uncle."

Kitty and Duncan looked uncomfortable but said nothing.

"It was quite natural to think so," Gilmartin went on, and Aylward nodded," and I was inclined to adopt that theory myself, especially as Mrs. Tretheway's attitude also seemed to encourage the idea. I did not hold it long, however, in view of several little discoveries which followed upon my arrival in Polreath. There was the obvious fact that Mr. Tretheway's car had been deliberately thrown over the cliff by two persons ; there was the discovery of the two messages in cipher, the appearance of a certain fur coat which, though undoubtedly Mr. Tretheway's, had been thought to have passed out of his possession or somehow disappeared long before, since Mr. Duncan and Miss Tretheway did not recognise it. Mrs. Tretheway had just as obviously identified it and the little card case. Another thing was the drugging of the St. Minfred constable by two men whose description I thought I recognised at once. All this, when coupled with two chance remarks which had been repeated to me, convinced me that I was up against something more than a mere family quarrel. These two remarks were, first of all, one made by Mr. Duncan to Superintendent Liddell regarding Mr. Tretheway's attitude towards trespassers on the cliff behind his house, and secondly the phrase overheard during a quarrel with Mr. Aylward to the effect that he "was up against something bigger than he thought."

"Heavens!" Aylward exclaimed, "I never thought

of that! I thought he was boasting about his physical strength."

"So did I," Gilmartin replied, "until I remembered that sailing vessel that Liddell and Mr. Duncan had seen on that Friday night, and until I had taken the remark in conjunction with all the other things I have mentioned. It was not long before I hit on the smuggling theory. Though everybody at The Mouls House itself seemed to be ignorant of it, I discovered from Miss Tansey—of all people—that a large sailing vessel had occasionally tied up under the cliff behind the house at night. She had seen the lights but had paid no particular attention to the matter until I pumped her. I went to the spot and confirmed her observations, for I found that the water there was deep enough to float a battleship, that two iron mooring rings had been let into the stone and that the spot was out of sight of Trebetherick Coastguard Station. Added to this were obvious signs of human occupation of the spot not long before."

"I often saw those rings," Duncan remarked, "and never thought of their having any signification."

"Naturally," Gilmartin said and continued, "as I said, I came to the conclusion that this was a case of smuggling. Now, I am little enough of a policeman and quite enough of an Irishman to have a sneaking sympathy for smugglers, for many people who are quite honest and trustworthy in other respects are willing—even eager—to cheat the Revenue. I've done it myself in a small way, I don't mind admitting. But smuggling drugs—narcotics! No! I draw the line at that—simply because they *are* drugs. And I had a shrewd suspicion by this time that it was a question of drug smuggling, for I had, to my own satisfaction at least, identified one of the men who had drugged Constable Treleaven as Hooky the Chink. Now Hooky is an old and hardened criminal whose father was a Limehouse Chinaman, and he had been in trouble before with regard to opium smuggling at

the docks. Therefore, I associated Mr. Tretheway's nocturnal excursions with some similar enterprise in which Hooky was interested. It meant nothing to me that people had talked of a girl; it meant even less that these jaunts were supposed by his family to be for the purpose of cooling off after a quarrel; I was not particularly discouraged by the argument that Hooky was an unlikely associate for Mr. Tretheway, for people sometimes have queer bedfellows. I had made up my mind that Mr. Tretheway was in some way mixed up with the dope smuggling business."

"How awful!" Kitty exclaimed with disgust.

"Yes," Gilmartin agreed. "Awful enough! I had, then, arrived at this conclusion when there came a new factor into the case—the disappearance of a girl from Padstow! I learnt that this was the young lady with whom Mr. Tretheway was supposed to be friendly and that she had undoubtedly been seen driving with him at night. From this I am afraid I made the inference which was that which caused the quarrels between Mr. Aylward and his uncle."

Aylward nodded, frowning at the same time.

"I made others, however," Gilmartin went on, "and I did not drop the old ones. I found that during the night drives the car used was the Napier and that it had been seen filled with luggage, and that this luggage had been consigned—on one occasion at least—to Waterloo by rail. This rather stumped me. Remember that I had no suspicion of anything other than drugs. I knew that these would not take up such an enormous space, unless the consignments were tremendous quantities of opium—an unlikely thing, I thought. In a word I couldn't fit the girl and the luggage into the framework I had built up for myself, and I was worried. Meanwhile Mr. Duncan had been attacked and kidnapped. This was not exactly a complication. I think I put this happening into its proper place almost at once."

"Just a moment," Duncan interrupted, "you seem

to have lost sight of the main case, the attack on and the disappearance of Mr. Tretheway."

"To tell you the truth," Gilmartin replied, "I had by this time given it a secondary place in my thoughts, for once I get my teeth into a dope case everything else is comparatively unimportant."

"Nevertheless," Duncan insisted, "suppose you tell us what you did think about that side of it before and after the attack on me!"

"Now, that's hardly fair!" Gilmartin objected with a smile. "However, I'll tell you. I had acquitted Mr. Aylward of a murderous attack on his uncle. I didn't know where he was, but that did not worry me, for no publicity having been given to the case during the week-end, I thought he had gone away somewhere and knew nothing of what had happened. That is why I gave that story to Pepler of the *Planet*—simply to smoke Mr. Aylward out, and incidentally to inspire the really guilty ones with false confidence."

"On what grounds did you acquit me?" Aylward asked curiously.

"On grounds that no judge or jury would accept." Gilmartin replied. "I had come to the conclusion that I could believe Miss Tretheway's and her mother's stories as to the hour of your departure, and I simply said to myself that in spite of your temper, which—I have heard—is particularly hasty, or perhaps because of it, you were not likely to return an hour after your quarrel on such a night for the purpose of strangling Mr. Tretheway."

Aylward bowed his appreciation.

"Yes," Duncan said, "that's all very fine! That's what you did *not* think. Now what *did* you think had happened?"

"I suppose I've got to tell you," Gilmartin smiled, "or you won't let me get any further. Before the attack on you I had suspected that a confederate of Mr. Tretheway's had quarrelled with him over, say,

a distribution of profits, and in that quarrel had killed him. Then that he had removed the body to the boat which I suspected was near at hand intending to drop it in the water further out at sea. The pitching of the car over the cliff I took to be an attempt to fake an accident or a suicide."

Duncan nodded.

"I see," he said, "and afterwards?"

"After the attack on you," Gilmartin continued, "I suspected Mr. Tretheway of having killed his attacker—I had heard of his great strength—and disappeared voluntarily. This seemed likely in view of the fact that he had disappeared dressed in his everyday clothes. That they were on him I concluded from the fact that his night-suit had been left behind. I had neglected this point before, but now I used it in favour of my new idea. I now thought that the attempt to fake an accident was his work—or by his orders. The attack on you I believed to be due to the fact that either he or messengers sent by him to recover compromising papers had caught you reading them and decided to remove you lest you give the smuggling show away. Yet, I couldn't explain away the man with the pointed beard seen by Miss Tretheway."

"You were right in some things and wrong in others!" Duncan commented.

"Yes," said Gilmartin leaning forward and placing his elbows on the table.

"At this point," he continued, "I decided to go to London, for whilst everything in Cornwall was in a muddle I knew that Hooky's headquarters were bound to be not far from his usual haunts, and Hooky was the only tangible thing at the moment. I meant to get hold of him and of his companion who, I was practically sure, was another bad hat called Aussie Albert. Still I was worried about Minnie Hawke. I wondered what on earth was her part in the show. I couldn't reconcile myself to the fact that it was a case of *crime passionnel* for then how did Hooky and

Aussie fit in? They were not likely to be—either of them—Mr. Tretheway's rivals. I could not picture them as the type to be smitten with the charms of a rustic—or rather a small town—belle. I had learned from Miss Tretheway who had persuaded her mother to tell her on the Sunday evening, that the quarrel on Friday had been caused by Mr. Tretheway's association with this very girl. I couldn't disentangle it. However, I reminded myself, my job was to find Mr. Tretheway, and my best lead was through Hooky the Chink. When I arrived at Scotland Yard I learned, rather to my disappointment, that I was to be shifted to another case."

CHAPTER XXXII

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

GILMARTIN sipped his liqueur.

"Talking is dry work," he said with a twinkle.

The others relaxed from their attitudes of strained attention and smiled.

"As I say," the detective continued, "I was somewhat disappointed at first when I found myself shunted over to another case. I had just definitely established the fact that the two strangers at the Rock hotel were Hooky the Chink and Aussie Albert and wanted to follow the matter up. When I read the data on my new case, however, I nearly stood on my head, for the information was that Aussie Albert was one of the suspected heads of the so-called "dope ring," though nothing could be proved against him. In fact the police of his district reported that he was going straight to all appearances. He was known to be in the habit of disappearing from London periodically, and it was presumed by some bright lad at the Yard that he was obtaining supplies of drugs from a ship on some unsuspected part of the coast, but he had not been traced to any of the smaller ports."

"They didn't look for him at a small enough one," Duncan laughed.

"Precisely," said Gilmartin and continued. "Meanwhile the question of Mr. Duncan's whereabouts was solved, and I jumped to the conclusion that Hooky and Aussie had come back to town and dumped him where he would be likely to be found, fearing that he would die on their hands."

"Why should they worry?" Duncan asked, "I had never seen them and in any case they could have shoved me into the sea if I had."

"That class of criminal," Gilmartin replied, "has a wholesome dread of the rope and stops short of killing. However, I'll come to that later. My theory on the matter was upset by the information that Aussie had come back to London too early to have been one of the attackers. However, being convinced that my new case and the Polreath case were one and the same—up to a point—I returned to Cornwall leaving Inspector Peters to take care of the London end. You see, the difficulty hitherto had been to discover where the drugs were entering the country. I was convinced that I had found the place, more especially as the messages I had found had now been decoded and undoubtedly referred to drug smuggling on an extensive scale—or at least so I thought.

"When I arrived at Padstow I found that Minnie Hawke had arrived back in the town authentically married to a rather pathetic little specimen of humanity. That stumped me for a time and I had no time to question the girl before the lifeboatmen brought in the body which was identified by a fisherman and by Minnie herself as that of Mr. Tretheway. My calculations were upset for a time until I noticed that the hands of the dead man—whose face was unrecognisable—were calloused like those of a man who had done hard manual labour all his life. I did not know Mr. Tretheway, but I was sure that his hands were not like that and I examined the body more carefully. I noticed that one of the forearms was tattooed—an anchor—and kept that in mind. A man who has been to China, I thought, might well be tattooed, but then I noticed how the wrists were tied. I know something about sailor's knots and these were not. That meant nothing to me then, but I found that the wrists had been tied *over* a piece of seaweed—that is to say, that before they had been tied a piece of seaweed already

there had not been removed. Now, thought I, seaweed could not possibly get *under* these ropes, therefore this man with calloused hands was tied up after he had been in the water. I thought of something I had been told about a recent shipwreck when a tanker had been lost with all hands. H'm ! I said to myself, this is the body of one of the poor devils from that tanker, dressed up in Mr. Tretheway's clothes, so that it may be thought that it *is* Tretheway. As it happened I was right. The man has been since identified as a certain John Cairns of Belfast. I was rather surprised when I learned that he had been dead before reaching the water, but that is explained by the fact that he was probably killed by a falling spar or something like that."

" It was clever of you to notice the seaweed," said Betty Penhaligon.

Gilmartin bowed.

" I do see some things," he laughed. " Anyhow, I went over to see Mrs. Tretheway, found out that her husband was not tattooed, then informed her that the body was consequently not that of her husband and in order to keep matters quiet, advised her to remain ill so that she could not be called to identify it. I took the opportunity to re-examine the maid at The Mouls House and discovered that she had heard more than she had admitted before. In fact I learned that she had heard all that mattered of the conversation between Mr. Tretheway and the man whom Liddell had seen attacking him. I deduced from what she told me that this man was probably a partner in Mr. Tretheway's smuggling activities. From a certain phrase I concluded that he did not object to the old man smuggling saccharine, but that he drew the line at dope. I found, by the way, that the girl thought that two men were in the room with Mr. Tretheway and that one of them was Mr. Aylward."

' No wonder ! " Aylward commented.

" A letter from Peters," Gilmartin continued, " and

another from the lady opposite "—Mrs. Gilmartin bowed—" then drew me out of the muddle these discoveries caused in my mind. I learned from them that a certain Mr. Newbold of New Bond Street had disappeared on the same day as Mr. Tretheway. When my wife saw Newbold's photograph she at once had one of her brilliant flashes of intuition. The only link binding Newbold to Polreath was the fact that his shop had been visited by Aussie Albert, but that was enough! She at once evolved a theory : ' Newbold was the man with the pointed beard, brown instead of black, whom Liddell had seen. He had quarrelled with Mr. Tretheway over something '—and here is where a man is always nowhere in these cases—' my wife actually put her finger on the spot without having as much data as I then had ; this something, said she, was probably dope. Newbold was a costumier and was smuggling silk in partnership with Mr. Tretheway. He had discovered that Tretheway was also smuggling dope and objected. Hence the quarrel. Find Newbold and you have solved the case.' Now what I had heard made me think the same, but I was no nearer to the end of my case."

Kitty Tretheway was showing signs of distress at this part of the narrative and Gilmartin seized the opportunity to pour himself out another drink.

" Meanwhile," he continued after a moment, " the Coastguard Officer at the request of the local police was having the coast thoroughly examined between Padstow and Port Isaac, for I had an idea that there might be an alternative spot for landing the stuff besides Polreath. He discovered by methods of his own that a strange craft was in the habit of putting in at irregular intervals after dark to a little bay on the north side of Pentire Head. His discovery was rendered immediately important by the arrival of a wire from Peters enclosing a message to Aussie Albert giving the date and the hour of the next arrival. I saw then how things were done. The stuff to be

smuggled was landed first of all in Ireland probably in large quantities—necessary if silk smuggling were to be profitable—warehoused there and brought over from Rosslare in amounts not large enough to excite comment if consigned from the nearest railway station. I questioned Bert Grant and discovered that silk was indeed being imported duty free and that his wife had been employed as a packer, for there were often ready-made Paris dresses which were brought in cases and which needed careful stowing away in ordinary trunks—the trunks consigned by Mr. Tretheway from Wadebridge Station. I may add that this was the extent of the guilt in the relations between the girl and Mr. Tretheway. She rode in his car because at night she could not get across to Padstow after her packing operations by crossing the river, so Mr. Tretheway used to drive her round by Wadebridge.

" One day Minnie discovered by chance that attached to the dresses were little packages of a substance she did not recognise. She questioned Mr. Tretheway about this and was told that they contained saccharine. Later, however, she heard a conversation between members of the crew which led her to believe that they contained " dope." She is a fairly sophisticated girl and as stupid and pigheaded as it is possible to be, but she is not really bad at heart so she decided to sever her connection with the band lest she be involved in a drug scandal, and also because Bert Grant wanted her to marry him at once. She accepted Bert, who had been courting her for a long time and told him all about things after they were married. She was afraid to tell me anything because shrewdly enough she had taken the measure of some of her former colleagues and was not willing to risk offending them. Her husband, however, told me everything! It so happened that her decision to leave corresponded with the discovery by Newbold of a packet of cocaine in one of the consignments of silk—or in a dress, I don't know which—hence the complications.

" The rest you know ! Knowing the day of arrival of the consignment Commander Douglas and I planned the raid on the boat from sea and shore, Aussie and Hooky having been arrested in London. In their place police drove the lorry packed with coastguards and police. The signal to the smuggler had been told me by Grant, whose wife with feminine wit and curiosity had used her powers of observation. Remember, that by this time I was convinced that Newbold had been done away with by Mr. Tretheway—Sorry, Miss Tretheway, but you wanted everything—and you can judge of my surprise when I found both of them tied up in the cabin of the sailing vessel. I think I made a good showing for I pretended to be wise about the whole thing. But I wasn't ! "

Gilmartin stopped and leaned back in his chair.

" And we ? " Duncan asked, " do you imagine that we are a lot wiser than when you began ? I don't think ! Go on ! We'll buy it ! "

The detective laughed and lit another cigar.

" I should have thought it was quite clear," he said, " but since you say it isn't I suppose I must humiliate myself further. What I am going to tell you I learned from Newbold and Mr. Tretheway who made a full breast of everything to me. What really happened is this : Newbold, who was in partnership with Mr. Tretheway in the smuggling of silk, discovered one day among his consignment of goods a package of cocaine and drew the very natural conclusion that his partner was doing a little dope smuggling on the side. He knew that Mr. Tretheway was smuggling saccharine and did not disapprove, though he himself was only interested in silk. The profits on that were quite enough thanks to Winston's efforts in the 1925 Budget. The discovery of the cocaine staggered the poor man, but he did not say anything about it for two reasons, namely that his partner's share in the working capital was represented by the converted yacht without which no smuggling of silk could be done, and secondly that

he did not want to make a row over what was perhaps an isolated instance. He got a further shock, however, when a message not intended for him came instead of one announcing the arrival of silk. Newbold might not have understood this message but for his previous discovery, but as things stood he realised that the dope business was a big one. You can imagine how Hooky, a drug addict himself, had mixed up one code message with another, sending the one intended for Newbold to the skipper of the boat and vice versa."

Gilmartin's hearers nodded comprehension.

"Newbold," the detective continued, "there and then decided to motor down to Polreath and have matters out with Mr. Tretheway. It was his car Mr. Aylward saw on the road. The Bond Street gentleman, arriving late, was relieved to find the front door of The Mouls House open—your fault, Mr. Aylward—and having been there before once at night he was able to find his way up to Mr. Tretheway's room. In his anger he snapped on the light and jumped on Mr. Tretheway who was in bed, but awake, accusing him of dope smuggling. Mr. Tretheway denied it and easily threw Newbold off—a fact missed by Superintendent Liddell—and there ensued the conversation overheard by the maid, Mr. Tretheway lying on the bed and Newbold standing over him. Newbold was not convinced by Mr. Tretheway's denials until the latter—remembering that the vessel was due at the cliff below that very night—proposed that they both go down and interview the others. The others were Hooky, Aussie, the skipper of the craft and a crew of six. Mr. Tretheway dressed and they went down, Newbold having moved his car up the road and extinguished the lights. When the others realised the object of the visit they promptly seized Newbold and Mr. Tretheway, they having been imprudent enough to threaten the dope smugglers with exposure and to take the yacht out of their hands."

"Then father wasn't in the drug business at all?" Kitty Tretheway exclaimed.

"No!" Gilmartin replied, "he knew nothing about it. He only dealt in silk and saccharine whose code numbers were "fifteen" and "two" in that message I found. The dope business was run entirely by Hooky, Aussie and the skipper, who thought it too good an opportunity to be missed."

"Oh, I am glad!" Kitty breathed with relief. "Yes? And then?"

"Then," Gilmartin continued, "Aussie, who is no fool, realised at once that Mr. Tretheway would be missed and went straight off to the garage to get the two-seater. He and Hooky—their footprints prove it—pushed the car over the cliff further up, never dreaming that it would be found so soon, and improved the occasion by putting in it Mr. Tretheway's pocket-book without examining it very closely apparently, or they would have seen that code message which had been handed over by Newbold to the old man. Then they threw the fur coat after it. This fur coat, by the way, was always kept on board for Mr. Tretheway's use on cold nights. He did not wish his every day fur to show tar stains and so forth. The long lost card case was in one of the pockets and Mr. Tretheway had never taken the trouble to remove it."

"By Jove!" Duncan exclaimed, "if the tide had not been high old Liddell and I could have crossed the beach and caught them taking out the car."

"Hardly," the detective replied with a smile. "If it had not been flood tide they would probably not have been there. As a matter of fact I have a suspicion that they may actually have been in the garage when you passed into the house."

Duncan's face fell.

"What happened then is not very clear," Gilmartin continued. "In any case, Hooky and Aussie had already made sure that there would be no interruption of smuggling operations by the St. Minfred constable.

They appear to have driven off—one in Newbold's and the other in Hooky's car—and met the yacht again at their alternative landing place, for it put out immediately. The storm had passed and on the way they picked up the dead body of the sailor from the tanker which had foundered earlier in the night. At Port Kellan, Hooky had the brilliant idea of dressing the body in Mr. Tretheway's clothes. Newbold had been foolish enough to say that his employees at the shop knew where he had gone and Hooky's idea was to accuse the costumier of having killed Mr. Tretheway in case the body was found. It was Hooky's clumsy tying of the wrists which gave the show away. A member of the crew tied the legs. Just the sort of idea a half savage like that would think of—tying up and mutilating the features of a dead man !

" Aussie then appears to have driven off to London in Hooky's car with the smuggled goods. At any rate he was in London on Sunday. He called at Newbold's shop to find out if his staff really knew where their boss was. Meanwhile Mr. Tretheway had crowed a little too soon. He boasted to his captors after the first day that there were papers in his desk which would give the silk and saccharine smuggling show away—and incidentally lead to the discovery of the dope business. Hooky was already apprehensive owing to certain activities of Scotland Yard and they immediately put back—they had made for the Irish coast—to get these papers. One of the men who went wore a false beard which I found in the cabin and which had been trimmed to resemble Newbold's—which is like Mr. Aylward's—for I found strands of clipped false hair on the floor. Mr. Duncan knows what happened then."

" Yes," Duncan replied, rubbing his head. " Stars ! Then darkest night ! "

" They found that Mr. Duncan's case was serious," Gilmartin continued. " In fact the skipper who had an elementary knowledge of surgery said that he would

die, so Hooky put him in the back of Newbold's car, which had been kept in a deserted fish curing cellar and drove him to London as being the safest place. He dumped him in Maida Vale and then left the car on Ham Common near Newbold's home."

"But I don't understand," Kitty said, "why they kept father and Mr. Newbold on board."

"Simply in order to make them sign an admission that they were the leaders of the dope smuggling gang," Gilmartin answered. "And thus give themselves into the gang's hands. They even offered them a share in the profits but in vain. Neither would sign. Newbold admitted to me that he nearly did so, but the old man refused and his example encouraged him to hold out also."

"Gad!" Aylward exclaimed, "I'm beginning to admire the old boy!"

"How on earth did Mr. Tretheway get into touch with such a crowd?" Duncan asked.

"It appears," the detective explained, "that the idea of smuggling silk originated with the Australian, who visited Newbold in the capacity of a business adventurer who was tired of running liquor into the United States and wanted something less risky. Newbold—who like many of us has a streak of dishonesty in him—was taken with the idea, for Aussie is very glib, and thought of Mr. Tretheway whom he had met somewhere. I think Mr. Tretheway was at one time interested in Chinese silks. He put the idea up to him and the upshot was that a sort of partnership was formed. Mr. Tretheway provided the craft, Newbold the working capital, and Aussie's contribution was simply the idea itself. I don't know exactly how profits were apportioned, but nobody seems to have been satisfied with them except Newbold. Mr. Tretheway took to the very remunerative business of smuggling saccharine; Aussie and his friends—for he had brought in Hooky and the skipper—thought of dope, or perhaps had intended to bring it in from

the very beginning. The method in both cases was the same. Little packages were secreted among the silk. This, I presume was to gull the Irish Customs who would not search very thoroughly—if at all—seeing that the silk was brought into the bonding warehouse solely for re-export."

"They won't do anything to father, will they?" Kitty asked anxiously.

"No, Miss Tretheway," Gilmartin replied gently, "nor to Newbold either for that matter. They've had their lesson, and furthermore, seeing that they were found by us on board under duress there is really no proof—no legal proof—of their complicity. As for the Padstow girl the case will not be pressed. The others will, however, get it hot at the Cornwall Assizes next week. I'm afraid, though, that there is going to be a certain amount of mudslinging in the course of the defence. By the way, how is Mr. Tretheway now?"

"Very broken," Kitty answered with a catch in her voice. "He has changed completely. He is so pathetically old and dependent on mother. He cannot let her out of his sight. She has forgiven him everything and is so glad that there was nothing in that girl business. And oh! I'm so glad he wasn't guilty of that awful drug traffic!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

A DOUBLE EVENT

ALL present were silent for some minutes.

Suddenly Gilmartin rose from his chair. A broad grin spread right across his face and a hideous wink, directed towards his wife, disfigured his handsome features.

" Ladies and Gentlemen ! " he began with mock solemnity, " having made my confession of failure—accompanied curiously enough by a measure of success, for the drug case was brought to what my chief calls a " spectacular finish," as described by that great organ of public opinion *The Planet*—may I now propose that we turn our thoughts to other more agreeable things. It is my livelihood, this detection business, and as it has become a second nature to me I cannot refrain from using my sleuth's eye in the most incongruous circumstances. While I was telling you the story of what Mr. Aylward has called my mental processes my eyes were not idle and by a judicious application of such processes I was busy at my favourite pastime of deduction. I should now like to know whether these deductions were correct. The question may be—it certainly is—indiscreet, but may I ask if those hands which gripped each other under the table during my story are going to remain metaphorically so gripped for a longer period—say, till death do them part ? "

Silence ! Blushes !

" Ah ! " the irrepressible Irishman continued, " my deductions were correct. I am not yet on the shelf !

I invite you, Mrs. Gilmartin, to rise and drink with me to the health of the future Mrs. Duncan *née* Tretheway and the future Mrs. Aylward *née* Penhaligon, coupled with the names of their prospective victims. No heeltaps ! "

Solemnly Mrs. Gilmartin obeyed.

The first to find her voice was Betty Penhaligon.

" That's not fair ! " she said, " we had not intended to announce anything yet, but it's next Easter. A double event ! Will you both come ? "

" Will we not ? " the detective and his wife sang in chorus.

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